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*John Whittier*  
*27 Bantasia*

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**ALFRED;**  
**AN EPIC POEM.**

**IN TWENTY-FOUR BOOKS.**

**BY**  
**J. COTTLE.**

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**SECOND EDITION.**

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**Vol. II.**

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1804.



# ALFRED. BOOK XIII.

SCENE—SELWOOD FOREST.

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## ARGUMENT.

*Alfred's visit to the Woodman,*

---

UPON his couch ALFRED had stretch'd himself,  
Sleepless, tho' seeking sleep; on coming scenes  
Poring with earnest brow. Before the dawn  
His castle he forsook, and roam'd alone  
Through the deep wood, unseeing and unseen,     5  
Save that amid the forest's thickest shades  
He cast his eye, and, wondering, SIGBERT saw;  
That lonely and most melancholy man!  
Walking sedate, on whom the dews of Heaven  
Stood thick, and told his nightly wanderings far. 10

Still through the wood, the King in silence moved,  
Contemplating himself, tho' near his home  
A stranger to its comforts; then again  
Pondering on all the wrongs, deep and untold,

A

His subjects felt; for whom, at opening morn, 15  
 And through the day, and at the hour of night,  
 He loved to cherish plans—so great, that, minds,  
 Sordid and groveling, might with one consent  
 Wrathful, have call'd them phantasies and dreams,  
 And, with convenient words and obstacles, 20  
 Talk'd learnedly. Yet ALFRED prized such thoughts,  
 And from his earliest youth, had sought to enlarge  
 The bounds of human intellect, and prove,  
 What joys the world might know if those who ruled  
 Did well their duty.

Now uncertainty— 25

Mists and thick clouds upon the future hung!  
 He fear'd the crimson dawn would never burst  
 That brought the hour, when he might consummate  
 All that his heart had cherish'd. 'Mid the strife,  
 T' augment the tumult of his breast, again, 30  
 ALSWITHA's form, through his distracted mind  
 Rush'd dress'd in terrors. 'Where is she,' he cried,  
 'And what her wrongs, unfriended, far away!'

When, near his path, he saw a Woodbine, fair,  
 Exhaling fragrancy, that, intertwined, 35  
 Circled a Deadly-night-shade, then look'd down  
 Upon the pois'nous plant on which it lean'd,  
 Pure and superior. He stopp'd! he gazed!

Silent awhile, then cried, 'Thou beauteous flower!  
 'Thou art **ALSWITHA**, or an emblem true 40  
 'Of her I love; for as thou gently lean'st  
 'Upon yon venom'd plant, and yet remain'st  
 'Spotless and dignified, **ALSWITHA** thus  
 'Upon the Danes shall rest—a little space,  
 'Conscious of her high worth, and looking down  
 'Untainted on her foes. This is indeed  
 'Heaven's work to calm my mind.'

A mighty plan

Now struck the King, attended with dismays  
 And dangers infinite, yet such as gave  
 To him no terrors. Hastening to the fort, 50  
 With earnest brow, thus, to his Chiefs he spake.

'Friends, who with me have borne all ills, endured  
 'Perils and strife, there is a gallant act,  
 'A bold achievement, which, to crown our toil,  
 'Some round me must perform. Regard your Prince!  
 'HUBBA and IVAR, with that other man—  
 'GUTHRUM, my most peculiar foe! are now  
 'Doubtless near Kenwith, forming future plans  
 'To desolate our country. Well we know  
 'When stratagems and schemes are used, the like  
 'Should counteract them, and the antidote  
 'Be as the bane. I would advise this deed :—

‘Instant some Saxon to go forth and learn,  
 ‘Amid the thickest Danes, e’en in their camp,  
 ‘How stands the enemy; their force how great; 65  
 ‘Their next designs; whether the recent flight  
 ‘Hath stay’d their anger, or their savage wrath,  
 ‘Rous’d into fiercer vengeance. Service this,  
 ‘Which none may dare perform, save in some guise  
 ‘Familiar to the eye, of humble sort. 70  
 ‘What think ye?’ —

Each replied. Most wise! The thought  
 Well was conceived.

ALFRED thus answer made;  
 ‘If one must go, to meet the Danes, and learn  
 ‘By many wiles their state, clad in some form,  
 ‘That bars suspicion; learning when they mean 75  
 ‘Next to assault us; where their weakness lies;  
 ‘With other knowledge, needful to be known,  
 ‘Yet only learnt among them.—Who around  
 ‘So proper as your King? The attempt be mine!  
 ‘I will depart alone.’

Ere he had ceased 80  
 Each Chieftain’s countenance had half express’d  
 Joy’s chearful smile, for each had hoped himself  
 That favour’d man; but when they heard the words,



' So proper as your King?' they look'd abash'd,  
 Confounded, as the man who travels long 85  
 O'er some parch'd desert, heartless, destitute,  
 Sighing for shelter, when, 'mid harrowing fears,  
 Far on his way, he spies the distant vale,  
 Water'd and fill'd with plenty, but, when fast  
 He speeds to meet it, finds, to his sore cost, 90  
 The fordless river, wide and stretch'd between.

Each Chief to ODDUNE look'd, waiting his words,  
 Who thus began.

' Thy pardon, Prince! I ask,  
 ' And if my earnest words to thee seem harsh,  
 ' Again I claim forgiveness, but, my heart, 95  
 ' Thou must not question. Monarch, stay the deed!  
 ' Tear from thine eye the film that covers it,  
 ' And view the precipice, which to thee seems  
 ' Smooth and secure. At this most trying hour  
 ' It is a subject's honor, to declare, 100  
 ' With firm, yet dutious words—one rash resolve,  
 ' One error, one false step, may sink us now  
 ' In ruin irretrievable, and bring  
 ' Destruction on us all.'

ALFRED exclaim'd,  
 ' Good ODDUNE! whence these unexpected fears?'

The Chief replied, ' It is no common cause—  
 ' And when I think what thou hast done to save  
 ' Thy ravaged country, what thine head hath borne,  
 ' Thy heart endured, thy gallantry perform'd  
 ' To screen from Denmark's race this hapless land  
 ' And cheer thy fainting subjects; when I cast  
 ' A backward glance, and think of days, when hope,  
 ' Seem'd as it ne'er had been, whilst every arm  
 ' Hung nerveless, even these, and so had hung,  
 ' But for thy words, thy constancy; then think, 115  
 ' Of this design, so pregnant with dismay  
 ' To thee and us, so hostile to the cause  
 ' Of Britain, tottering now, 'tween life and death,—  
 ' I should partake of something less or more  
 ' Than human kind, if, hearing these thy words, 120  
 ' I did not start, and with my spirit strive  
 ' To stay thy purpose.' Thus the King replied.

' ODDUNE, thy zeal doth but convince me more  
 ' That thou art one whom men so earnest seek,  
 ' So seldom find—a Friend! that in thy heart 125  
 ' Thou lovest well thy Country and thy King:  
 ' But, 'tis not honesty which always sees  
 ' The secret bounds, where rashness shews itself  
 ' And courage ends! and tho' thy heart be pure,  
 ' Thy wisdom undisputed, yet thou know'st, 130  
 ' Thyself too well, to think, the heavenly light,—

' Infallibility resides with thee.  
 ' Tho' to thy weigh'd and fix'd opinions  
 ' Deference be due, yet in this certain point  
 ' With thee I differ, for to me it seems 135  
 ' Conduct most wise to act as I have said.'

Like one who on the wide sea cast away  
 And, in his little boat, who long has toil'd,  
 Till, weary, he reclines, then calls to mind  
 The object of his toil, and strives again ; 140  
 So ODDUNE felt, and to the King replied.

' I can declare of wisdom, as I ought,  
 ' It dwelleth not with me; and I have found  
 ' This heart too fallible to trust its thoughts  
 ' With more than common confidence, yet hours,  
 ' And certain seasons sometimes will be found  
 ' When the full blaze of truth so strikes the soul,  
 ' And hides all doubt, that minds of modesty  
 ' Forget their characters, and half assume  
 ' The Prophet's tone and dignity; as such 150  
 ' Seem I to speak: for never did I feel  
 ' A more fix'd certainty in mortal ways,  
 ' Than when I say—If thou dost deck thyself  
 ' In art and stratagem—If thou dost leave  
 ' This thy retreat, and wander far away, 155  
 ' Hoping to hide the countenance, that tells

' Of unfeign'd majesty—dare venture near  
 ' That enemy, the Dane, and, fondly trust  
 ' Good will attend it—'Tis that trust I fear  
 ' That bodes destruction, for a certain voice, 160  
 ' Tells me that thence, thou never shalt return !'

ALFRED replied, ' Thou may'st as well conspire  
 ' To stop yon sun, or, to the man, call out,  
 ' Falling from some high precipice, ' return !'  
 ' And think that he will heed thee, as attempt 165  
 ' To stop my course.' Yet ODDUNE spake once more.

' I know that thou wilt pardon me, oh King !  
 ' Nor doubt the motive which to these my words  
 ' Gives such unwonted energy. Once more  
 ' Hear me and then decide. To serve the cause  
 ' We fight for, and promote thy subjects' good,  
 ' In this design, doubtless hath govern'd thee ;  
 ' This is most clear. But may not all the good  
 ' Thou hop'st to gain, some one, on easier terms,  
 ' Secure for Britain? May not one of us?— 175  
 ' Nay, even I, go forth to calculate  
 ' On all I see and hear—bringing thee word,  
 ' Most faithfully. If wise to thee it seem  
 ' Thus to assume another's character,  
 ' And wander 'mid the enemy, unknown— 180  
 ' The bold adventure doth so suit my mind

‘ And mode of thought, that I would fain implore,  
 ‘ Most earnestly, this proof of confidence.  
 ‘ I must not, cannot be denied!’

Like one—

A blushing maid, who, when she hears the name  
 Dear to her heart, appears to hear it not,  
 And rather than repeat her True-love's name,  
 Would wander far about. So ALFRED seem'd  
 'Till, calling up his courage, thus he spake.

‘ ODDUNE, one motive I had vow'd to keep 190  
 ‘ Conceal'd from every heart; but these thy words  
 ‘ So probe my spirit, and on what I say  
 ‘ Such absence of all meaning cast, that I,  
 ‘ To satisfy myself, that I am one  
 ‘ Who hath some meaning, must declare the truth—  
 ‘ Is there not ONE amid the Danish camp,  
 ‘ Think'st thou, most dear?’ Instant in other light,  
 ODDUNE the once mysterious subject saw.  
 ALFRED continued, ‘ These thy arguments  
 ‘ Clearly are fraught with wisdom, and my heart—  
 ‘ My understanding feels their cogency;  
 ‘ But thou hast dived too deeply in that gulf—  
 ‘ The human mind, not to acquaint thyself,  
 ‘ That frigid reason but assumes the reins  
 ‘ When passion leaves them. I must seek the spot,

A 5

- ‘ Where she abides, and fain would I persuade
- ‘ This heart, that of the bold experiment
- ‘ Some good may follow.’

ODDUNE saw how weak

The power of language to oppose the will  
 Fix’d and determin’d, and objection more 210  
 ‘ Forbore to urge. When thus he spake: ‘ What name,  
 ‘ What character would’st thou assume, to keep  
 ‘ Far off, suspicion? for, as well thou know’st,  
 ‘ Should Danes suspect thee, tho’ their Mother Earth  
 ‘ Sent from her deepest cave, a warning voice 215  
 ‘ To save thee from perdition—Thou would’st die!’

- ‘ This do I know,’ cried ALFRED, ‘ but, in vain
- ‘ The thought assails me. I am bent, and now
- ‘ Prudence must govern what it might not teach.
- ‘ What character would I assume, dost ask?— 220
- ‘ The HARPER! for my fingers well can touch
- ‘ Its gentlest strings, and bid each listener feel
- ‘ The soul of harmony.’

ODDUNE replied,

‘ If thou art fix’d indeed, no better name  
 ‘ May’st thou assume. But then, thy dress! A thought  
 ‘ Darts through my mind. As yester-eve I roam’d  
 ‘ Far through this wood, near me I spied a hut,

‘ Green as the leaves that shaded it, and half  
 ‘ Screen’d by the boughs. When first I saw its shape,  
 ‘ It seem’d to me that nothing *likelier* look’d 230  
 ‘ To simple cottage ; and, as thus I thought,  
 ‘ My doubts were realized ! for at the door  
 ‘ There stood a man. I saw him and approach’d,  
 ‘ To ask his name and calling. Dost thou wish  
 ‘ To hear the stranger’s answer?’ ALFRED cried,  
 ‘ Speak on !’ When thus he spake :

‘ The man I saw,  
 ‘ He was an aged Woodman ; apt to dwell  
 ‘ With fondness on the tale of other times,  
 ‘ Yet, not obtrusive, whilst his words declar’d  
 ‘ The thoughtful rustic. Hoary were his locks, 240  
 ‘ And flowing, and the language of his eye  
 ‘ So mild, that it was plain his wants were few,  
 ‘ And that his spirit with the world had borne  
 ‘ Small intercourse. I never shall forget  
 ‘ The feelings that along my heart-strings ran, 245  
 ‘ When looking round his cottage, I perceived  
 ‘ So many comforts. On a bank it stood,  
 ‘ Adorn’d with flowers, whilst by its side there flow’d  
 ‘ A stream so clear, which with its bubbling noise  
 ‘ So sooth’d me, that it seem’d a paradise 250  
 ‘ For all of wise desires.

‘ In earlier days,  
 ‘ He knew to work, and round his cot had made  
 ‘ A grassy plat, luxuriant; there was found  
 ‘ The blameless food, which Nature to her sons  
 ‘ Gives bountiful, for there were herbs and roots, 255  
 ‘ And he was deeply skill’d in healing lore,  
 ‘ And knew the parts and properties that gave  
 ‘ Health and good cheer. When he beheld me first,  
 ‘ He started back, and look’d as it were long  
 ‘ Since he had seen the human countenance. 260  
 ‘ ’Twill make thee smile when I relate my tale!  
 ‘ When to his cot he saw me hastening, firm,  
 ‘ He stood against the door-post, and uprais’d,  
 ‘ Weak in his trembling hand, a rusty sword,  
 ‘ And seem’d to bid defiance; then I saw, 265  
 ‘ Within the hut, a woman, like himself,  
 ‘ Laden with years, and she too had a staff,  
 ‘ Which from the ground she raised, as she would aid  
 ‘ Her bolder husband. Seeing this, I stretch’d  
 ‘ My hand to greet them : first the old man frown’d,  
 ‘ Then, on the earth his doughty weapon cast,  
 ‘ And forward came to give me the true grasp  
 ‘ Of kindred fellowship. I enter’d in ;—  
 ‘ And there simplicity and comforts too  
 ‘ Abounded, for I saw—But wherefore thus 275  
 ‘ Speak I of simple joys each cottager  
 ‘ Through Britain’s wide domain might boast, if Danes



' Spared their low dwellings. This I meant to say.  
 ' Beside his chimney hearth I saw a Harp,  
 ' Perfect and comely. If thou yet resolve 280  
 ' To act the Minstrel's part, we there will haste,  
 ' And the old man shall lend thee his good harp,  
 ' And garb so needful.' ' Instant,' said the King.  
 ' Let us depart !' When both together sought  
 The distant Woodman.

After patient toil; 285  
 They reach'd the door and enter'd. O'er the fire,  
 That gave its cheerful blaze, the aged pair  
 Sat musing, and, 'mid many a lengthen'd pause,  
 Made grave remark, often in idleness,  
 To sooth or to beguile the lingering day, — 290  
 Perchance of season fair, of lowering sky,  
 Spring backward, or the fruits of autumn drench'd  
 With rains untimely. Thus the hours pass'd on,  
 With simple converse, such as innocence  
 And rest might furnish.

As the old man raised 295  
 His glimmering eye, to mark who touched the latch,  
 He saw the Chief who on the former day  
 Had enter'd, and, beside him, one, unknown.  
 ' Welcome to this low cot !' he joyful cried,  
 And up to ODDUNE came full courteously, 300

And grasp'd his hand ; then, turning to the King,  
 Welcom'd him o'er and o'er, as tho' the words  
 Oft told, new sense convey'd and better shew'd  
 The master's hospitality. The King  
 Spoke to him thus :

‘ You have a tranquil place, 305  
 ‘ Good father, in this wood. If well I deem,  
 ‘ Content dwells with you. Am I right, old man ?’  
 ‘ Aye very right, good warrior ! I have thrived  
 ‘ Long in this glen, and every day I live  
 ‘ Makes me more cheerful.’

ALFRED thus replied ; 310  
 ‘ Your health is good !’ ‘ Truly ! a healthier man,  
 ‘ Throughout the country, lives not to enjoy  
 ‘ Heaven's bounty. When a boy my father cried,—  
 ‘ Hear what my father told me. ‘ Rise betimes !  
 ‘ Be frugal ! fear not work ! and, never drink 315  
 ‘ Aught but this brook.’ ‘Twas there when he was  
 young,  
 ‘ And still beside my cottage on it runs,  
 ‘ I know not where, nor whence ! nor of it heed  
 ‘ So that it serve my purpose. There it is,  
 ‘ And finer water never quench'd the thirst 320  
 ‘ Of weary traveller. These words I heard,  
 ‘ When young, a careless Urchin, who, in truth,

‘ All things alike, forgot, save food and play ;  
 ‘ Yet, how, I cannot tell, these passing words  
 ‘ Impress’d my fancy.’

‘ Husband !’ cried the Dame, 325  
 ‘ These warriors brave, heed not the tale of thine  
 ‘ So often told ! What is the Brook to them ?’

Cried ALFRED, ‘ Mother, stay ! we do indeed  
 ‘ Regard thy husband’s story. Speak thou on !’  
 The woodman answer’d. ‘ Well if I *may* speak,  
 ‘ They struck my fancy, and from that good hour,  
 ‘ Down e’en to this, I often think of them,  
 ‘ For I have found the words so true, that now,  
 ‘ Were my son living, I should say the same  
 ‘ When death approach’d me.’

‘ Had’st thou then a son ?’ 335  
 ‘ Not living !’ ALFRED cried, ‘ What caus’d his  
 death ?’  
 The old man wiped his eye, and said, ‘ I thought  
 ‘ Never again the story to have told ;  
 ‘ But as I like thy countenance, and seem  
 ‘ Free in discourse—why thou shalt have the tale.  
 (When from her seat the aged woman rose  
 And pass’d the door)

‘ A hopeful son was mine !  
 ‘ He never paid the bad man’s penalty !  
 ‘ Or stopp’d the flying criminal all pale :  
 ‘ I loved him, he was dutiful and good. 345  
 ‘ This was the cause that made him leave his home.  
 ‘ To the far-distant church he once had gone,  
 ‘ ’Twas of a Sunday, and he went to hear  
 ‘ The preaching and exchange some bows and darts  
 ‘ For clothes then needed. When, as night came on,  
 ‘ He reach’d our home. I never saw a face  
 ‘ So changed, an eye so wild, so fix’d a look  
 ‘ Of something that within seem’d hard to say.  
 ‘ His mother cried (the aged woman there  
 ‘ Sitting so still on yonder stone) she cried, 355  
 ‘ What ails thee ? Son ! Speak, for I fear me much  
 ‘ Harm hath pursued thee !’ No he said, no harm ;  
 ‘ But there, I trow, is harm enough abroad.—  
 ‘ Have ye not heard the news ? No, said we both.  
 ‘ This was his answer :

‘ I do fear for ye, 360  
 ‘ My parents ! for o’er Saxon ground there roam  
 ‘ Bands of fierce men, so fierce, that had one told,  
 ‘ A stranger, this my tale, ye straight would cry,  
 ‘ It cannot be ! In truth ’tis hard to think  
 ‘ That such men live ! You late beheld me go 365  
 ‘ To the far church, with my well-temper’d bows,

' To barter, but, most piteous was the sight !  
 ' No church was there !—It was a ruin'd pile !  
 ' And 'tween the walls, yet standing, there arose  
 ' Columns of smoke. I wist not what it meant ;  
 ' But doubting that some accident had thus  
 ' Destroy'd the well-known house, awhile I paused,  
 ' Then through the darken'd arch-way pass'd.

' The sight

' Tho' well accounted for, so fill'd my mind  
 ' With obscure apprehensions, that I stood,      375  
 ' Uncertain, if to enter or return  
 ' Back with my burden. As I pondered thus,  
 ' Silent, and listening to the rushing noise  
 ' Of smoke and cracking wood ; I heard a groan,  
 ' Slow-drawn ! More thoughtful I appear'd. Again,  
 ' The same heart-rending groan ! It was a sound  
 ' That made my very blood—curdle, my limbs,  
 ' Quake as thou se'st them now from memory.'  
 ' These were his words. My son then further spake.'

' With cautious step, and trembling, I advanced,  
 ' And saw a monk, pale as the ashen bark,  
 ' Yet smear'd with blood. He raised his languid eyes  
 ' And turn'd them to me ; when he feebly said,  
 ' If friend thou art, one favor do I ask,  
 ' Bring hither yonder stone, and at my head      395

' Cast it in haste, for agony supreme  
 ' Preys on me !' Nearer to the spot I drew,  
 ' And, looking at the man, knew well his face—  
 ' 'Twas father BURNULF! that good priest, who oft  
 ' Had told us of our duties to high Heaven, 400  
 ' And fellow man ; whom often we have heard,  
 ' Like one who brought glad tidings, in the church,  
 ' Then fall'n, in which he lay.

' I rais'd his head ;  
 ' He knew me and thus spake. ' What is it thou ?  
 ' Ah ! never wilt thou listen more, good youth ! 405  
 ' To aged BURNULF ! At his hour of death,  
 ' Thou comest !—Fetch yon stone, and for the past,  
 ' Shew me this kindness !' Never, cried my boy !  
 ' Support thyself with what thou oft hast said  
 ' Me, would support in death ! And tell me straight  
 ' What means this overthrow ?'

' The priest replied,  
 ' I will strive hard to say, and to suppress  
 ' Pain's influence. Thou speakest right, young man !  
 ' 'Twas wrong ! Faith should support me now ! My  
 tongue,  
 ' Tho' parch'd and grown unwieldy, shall declare  
 ' This woeful change, but I must tell it brief,  
 ' My breath is short.—This ruin is the Dane's !

' From some far distant land, a wolfish race,  
 ' Fierce and unfeeling, scorning God and Man,  
 ' Have landed here, and ALFRED, our brave King,  
 ' In vain resists them. They are terrible  
 ' As Ocean when he roareth,\* and like him  
 ' Delight in blood. They here surrounded us,  
 ' And, having forced the doors, with torch and sword,  
 ' Rush'd in! The spoil thou viewest, but, beneath,  
 ' Lie my dead brethren. Senseless I remain'd,  
 ' But tho' my limbs were crush'd, as thou may'st see,  
 ' I still surviv'd, and many, like me, felt,  
 ' Life wavering, and with groans we fill'd the air:  
 ' But for these many hours, no groans but mine  
 ' Have sounded, and they too will cease, tho' soon,  
 ' Not soon enough!

' My dying words are these—

' Oh youth! depart and arm thyself! Find out  
 ' Thy Monarch's standard! for, in such a cause,  
 ' 'Twere villainy to man, and insult vile 435  
 ' To Heaven above, idly to stand and gaze!  
 ' Go from this scene of ruin, and as once  
 ' I bade thee seek with all men peace and love;  
 ' I now command thee, with a warning voice,

\*There was a superstition among the Anglo-Saxons, that the sea, in a tempest, was a monster that roared for human flesh.

' To meet our foes ! For whilst the Saxon arm 440  
 ' Fails to destroy them, piteous is the state  
 ' For all who live !'

' The good man's voice grew faint,  
 ' And now with harder labourings, distant far,  
 ' One from the other, he essay'd to breathe,  
 ' But, difficult, when, back he stretch'd himself,  
 ' And calmly died.

' So hither, cried my son,  
 ' I haste to tell my purpose ! Thou art old !  
 (Looking at me, who speechless stood) he said,  
 ' And well may'st plead excuse from martial toil ;  
 ' But if my arm should fail at such an hour 450  
 ' To wield the sword, and in my country's cause,  
 ' Fight manfully ;—if I should shun my King,  
 ' And in this forest live inglorious  
 ' When ruin and the enemy stalk round—  
 ' I should not well deserve to be thy son.' 455

' I need not tell ye, strangers ! what my thoughts  
 ' At this recital, and if long I paused  
 ' Whether to bid my brave son go or stay.  
 ' That night he left us ! These were his last words.  
 ' I go, my parents ! to discharge the calls 460  
 ' Of sacred duty ! but, again, I trust



‘ To see your faces, glad, and round our board  
 ‘ Talk of past perils.’ ‘ Then he left our home !

‘ And hast thou never heard,’ the King replied,  
 ‘ Of this thy son ?’ ‘ No, answer’d the old man,  
 ‘ Had he been living, we should long ere this  
 ‘ Have seen his face, for he was kind at heart,—  
 ‘ All that a sire could wish ! I may declare,  
 ‘ For many a month I never went to rest  
 ‘ But in my dreams I saw him ; yet, that time 470  
 ‘ Now is gone by, and I am pleas’d to think,  
 ‘ Tho’ dead, he perish’d, fighting for his King.—  
 ‘ Forgive these tears !

ALFRED replied, ‘ Old man !  
 ‘ Thou had’st not well deserved so good a son,  
 ‘ If thou could’st think, unmov’d, upon his death.’

‘ He was a hopeful son, the Woodman cried ;  
 ‘ Duteous and kind, from early youth the same,—  
 ‘ Like the fair apple-tree, when spring drew near,  
 ‘ His buds were blossoms. Never mortal left  
 ‘ This lower earth, better prepared to pass 480  
 ‘ Death’s scrutiny.’

‘ He *was* a noble son !’  
 The King replied. ‘ Aye master he was good,’

The Woodman said. ‘ But I shall see him yet !  
 ‘ There is a better world. Altho’ alone,  
 ‘ And far from human-kind, we love to think 485  
 ‘ Upon that last and best inheritance—  
 ‘ Soon to arrive ! Here every night and morn,  
 ‘ We look to God, and sing his praises, fill’d  
 ‘ With fervent gratitude ; for here our eyes  
 ‘ Behold earth’s changes : night preceding morn,  
 ‘ And morn the night, in long succession ; spring  
 ‘ And all the seasons, in an endless course,  
 ‘ Moving around us, bidding us arise  
 ‘ And praise our Maker, who from nothing call’d  
 ‘ This wonderous frame ; and pleasant is the thought  
 ‘ Of many a word, once heard in that fair church,  
 ‘ Now fall’n, which rais’d my mind to those good  
     things,—  
 ‘ A Saviour, and a world of blessedness ;  
 ‘ When to be heard again ? Ah, tell me when !’

‘ Your’s is true wisdom, cried the King, which first  
 ‘ Descended from above, and still directs  
 ‘ Our hopes, our better prospects to the skies.  
 ‘ This knowledge will remain, whilst all beside  
 ‘ The whirlwind, Death, like chaff, will bear away.  
 ‘ I honor thee, old man ! Soon, do I trust, 505  
 ‘ That that good church, and many kindred piles,  
 ‘ Will bless this land, where, others, like thyself,

‘ May learn where dwells their confidence. But say,  
 ‘ How cam’st thou in this place? These words of thine  
 ‘ Speak not a Woodman’s mind.’

The old man said, 510

‘ I am a Woodman; here my father dwelt,  
 ‘ And here have I; and if my words bespeak  
 ‘ Other than rustic’s mind, it is that one—  
 ‘ A HERMIT, near, abides—an aged man,  
 ‘ Well skill’d in mysteries of many kind; 515  
 ‘ From him I learn’d, all that I humbly speak  
 ‘ Of good, and precious be his memory  
 ‘ When he is dead and gone! From dwelling thus,  
 ‘ In one long quietness, our minds have learn’d  
 ‘ True wisdom, by believing Happiness, 520  
 ‘ Confin’d to no one spot, may e’en be found,  
 ‘ With virtue, in this cottage. Here our days  
 ‘ Pass on unruffled, and, ’till death draw nigh,  
 ‘ Here be our resting place.’

When, in new tone,  
 The Woodman thus again. ‘ Pardon my words !  
 ‘ I never roam to learn what tidings strange  
 ‘ Earth teems with, but a lingering wish to know  
 ‘ How runs the world on some great scale  
 ‘ And interest large, makes me inquire of you  
 ‘ What news abroad.’

ALFRED replied, ' Old man ! 530

- ' To tell thee of the state of human things,
- ' Might leave thy spirit, not as it now is—
- ' Peaceful and calm. Thy race is almost run,
- ' And fit it is, that thou should'st never more
- ' Meddle with earthly ways. Here rest awhile, 535
- ' Most happy in thine ignorance. Old man !
- ' One favour would I ask. Lend me I pray
- ' Yon Harp, which by thy hearth I see. Again
- ' I will return it whole.'

The Woodman cried,

- ' Warrior, 'tis thine ! I lend it with good will ; 540
- ' But I must say to thee—preserve it safe ;
- ' It was my son's ! He many an hour hath sat
- ' Upon yon verdant bank, and, as the sun
- ' Slowly declined, so cheerily hath play'd ;
- ' With midnight songsters, making the far wood
- ' Ring with his melody, that I had hoped
- ' This one memorial of more happy days
- ' Long to have kept ; but in thy countenance
- ' There is so much of what my son once was—
- ' That I *must* lend it thee !'

' Thank thee ! old man,' 550

- ALFRED replied. ' This harp I well will keep,
- ' And prize it truly : ever when beheld

' Thinking of thee, and of the anxious care  
 ' Thou hast again to see it. One request,  
 ' More would I make. It is an honest cause 553  
 ' For which I ask thy favour. I am bound  
 ' To look the character I do not seem—  
 ' Many to serve. Hast thou no humble garb  
 ' To lend me ?'

' Yes !' the woodman cried, ' my son's !  
 ' His mantle shall be thine !

And now the King 560  
 Stood in his rustic dress. He took the Harp  
 And having swept its strings, the old man rose ;  
 Joy seized his breast ; his eye with rapture shone,  
 And every note a sympathetic chord  
 So woke within, that he his dormant soul, 565  
 Felt roused to ecstasy, and round the King,  
 Nimbly he danced, unconscious what he did,  
 When ALFRED stopp'd, and to the woodman spoke.  
 ' My time is short. I now must bid adieu,  
 ' With grateful heart, for many a lesson taught 570  
 ' And truth received—Old man, awhile, farewell !'  
 The King then pass'd the threshold.

From the stone

At which the mother sooth'd her sorrowing mind,  
 She heard the Harp—so long neglected sounds  
 That made her raise her head and listening sit ; 575  
 'Till, by the voice inspired, she seized her staff,  
 And totter'd toward her dwelling.

As the King

Came from the door, ' My son ! my son ! ' she cried,  
 ' My long lost son ! ' and eager clasp'd him round,  
 When, recollection came ! Her grasp-relax'd ! 580  
 She look'd upon the King, and, pale, exclaim'd,  
 ' That face is not my son's ! God prosper thee  
 ' For this delusion !'

To her cottage then

Feebly she moved. When, parting with his friend,  
 To seek the Danish camp, ALFRED set off, 585  
 Clad in his new attire, and on his back  
 Bearing the harp.

No common look was his !

A stately aspect, dignified, yet mild,  
 Declared the Monarch ; and tho' half conceal'd  
 By poverty's plain garb, yet what appear'd 590  
 Told who he was. As doth the broken bow,  
 Shining in heaven's wide vault, when some dark cloud,

Obtrusive, glides between, and, to the eye,  
Yields but one half his glory.

Toward the Danes

ODDUNE beheld him pass ! when, to himself, 595  
Sorrowing he cried. “ No more shall I behold  
‘ Thy face, oh King ! Destruction thou has sought,  
‘ And thou wilt find it ! yet, thy fame shall reach  
‘ The distant time ! For thee th’ enraptured Scald  
‘ Shall strike the Harp, and tell posterity 600  
‘ Of ALFRED’s worth, who, in these years forlorn,  
‘ When darkness reign’d, when superstition scowl’d,  
‘ Rose like a star miraculous, and spread,  
‘ O’er earth, a light, which when this age hath pass’d—  
‘ Nay, age on age, down to the farthest time, 605  
‘ Shall still be visible !’

He watch’d the King,

‘Till in the mellow’d distance he was lost.  
And when he thought of all the secret snares,  
The dangers and dismays that throng’d his path—  
The pitfalls and the unsuspected wiles ; 610  
He felt as sorrowful, as doth the sire  
Who, many a long year to the son beloved,  
Hath told of virtue and her charms, and mark’d,  
Upon his cheek, the glow of kindling worth ;

Then, at the hour of separation, sees 615  
 His son go forth, into an evil world,  
 Where quick-sands are, and where the whirlpool,  
     deep,  
 Lurks to o'erwhelm the innocent.

He sigh'd,  
 And to the distant castle urged his way.

END OF BOOK XIII,



## ALFRED. BOOK XIV.

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 ARGUMENT.

*Alfred's visit to the Danish Camp.*

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CAUTIOUS and slow the Royal Harper moved  
 Toward Kenwith's Castle. One so used to feel  
 The hard earth's pillow, dreaded not the hour  
 Of midnight drawing near. He saw the sun  
 Cradled in clouds, resplendent, slowly sink 5  
 'Mid ocean's wave, scarce seen, whose bosom heaved  
 With gentle perturbation, as rude Night  
 Assumed his empire, and with tyrant sway  
 Usher'd his stormy reign.

As morn appear'd,

ALFRED arose, refresh'd, and journey'd on, 10  
 Contemplating the future, with its host  
 Of grand events, ideal, but in which  
 The soul partook. Now on a hill he stood,  
 When, in the plain beneath, Kenwith he saw,

And, near, th' encamp'd Danes! A sudden chill 15  
 Rush'd through his blood. 'These feelings,' cried  
 the King,

' Nature must own ! they spring not from my will,  
 ' I know them not, their name, nor whence they came.'

Yet ALFRED felt, whilst gazing at the Danes,  
 Like one, who, on a distant voyage bent, 20  
 Leaves friends and parents, travelling stout of heart,  
 Who never yet the ocean wide hath seen,  
 And when he spies the world of waters, starts,  
 And for a moment thinks, how better far  
 To rest at home in quietness, 'till grown 25  
 Familiar with the sight, fearless of harm,  
 His soul again returns.

Whilst gazing thus  
 He heard a noise, and, looking round, beheld  
 A hostile band of Danes—approaching fast!  
 When from his back the King his Harp took down,  
 And play'd most merrily, making the birds  
 Upon their wings move slow, or perch around  
 On bush or tree, to catch one passing note  
 With which to charm the ear of lonely man,  
 List'ning so earnest, that he half forgets 35  
 The woes that made him lonely. Near they came,  
 When ALFRED ceas'd his tune, bending profound.

The Danish leader cried aloud,

‘ Young man !

‘ But for that instrument, thou hadst ere this

‘ Grappled with death. Who art thou ? What thy  
name ? 40

‘ Speak, or this sword shall with thy heart’s-blood  
play !’

ALFRED replied, ‘ I am a wandering man,  
‘ Honest, tho’ poor, and used with this good Harp  
‘ To play, as late ye heard me. Would you more,  
‘ Of music hear ?’ ‘ Aye, play !’ exclaim’d the Dane.  
The King then touch’d his Harp with such sweet notes  
Of tenderest minstrelsy, that the warm tear,\*  
Each iron-hearted Dane within his eye,  
Felt start. One cried, ‘ ’Tis well ! Now play again.’  
When ALFRED with a bolder finger swept 50  
The sounding string, and roused the martial soul  
In all who heard, making their wild eyes glare,—  
Their limbs, in frantic attitude dance round,  
‘Till, fearful for himself and Harp, he stopp’d,

\* The songs of the Scalds when accompanied with the harp, are said to have produced the most wonderful effects, and to have roused or repress’d the most impetuous passions of the mind.

Sudden, when the same leader cried aloud, 55  
Raising his sword,

‘Thou art a Saxon man !  
‘Unused are we to let such pass unharm’d,  
‘And doubtful now I stand, whether to spare,  
‘Or with this sword consume thee.’ Once again,  
ALFRED his Harp uplifted, and began 60  
A mild and soul-subduing song, of one,  
A shepherd youth who lov’d a shepherdess—  
‘Mid winter’s snows, fated one grave to find.

‘Sweet is thy song, young Harper, cried the Dane,  
‘But thou art yet a Saxon!’ As the King 65  
Again uprais’d his Harp—the haughty foe  
Stopp’d him and cried, ‘Forbear! Now answer me,  
‘I scorn thy melody! Say whence thou cam’st,  
‘And, as thou valuest life, instant declare  
‘If aught thou know’st of ALFRED, or what path, 70  
‘ODDUNE his Chief pursued.’

When, thus the King:

‘I am a simple Harper, and I love  
‘My Harp so well,—so little do I heed  
‘The bustling world and all the strifes of men,  
‘That, wandering unconcern’d, I know no care, 75  
‘But to preserve my Harp and sit at ease.’

‘ Answer my words,’ exclaim’d the angry Dane.  
 ‘ Know’st thou of ALFRED ? of his place, and state ?’

When, unconcern’d, again the King replied ;  
 ‘ In wandering o’er this land, I sometimes hear 80  
 ‘ Of him you ask for—is he not our King ?’  
 ‘ A simple fellow,’ cried a Dane. ‘ Forbear !  
 ‘ Let him pass on. From him we nought can learn,  
 ‘ And, ’tis most manifest, can nothing fear.’  
 When all mov’d onward.

ALFRED saw them go, 85  
 And felt like one—a northern mariner,  
 Who, sailing near that vortex, far renown’d  
 Through all the Arctic, finds, half wild with dread,  
 His vent’rous bark, check’d in her bold career,  
 And moving toward the fatal gulf, that roars 90  
 Loud in his hearing ; whilst no gale appears  
 To check th’ inevitable fate, and fast,—  
 Fast and more fast, the vessel moves to death !  
 When, rushing through the clouds, the wind is heard !  
 And soon it fills the sails, and while his eye 95  
 Gazed on destruction, bears him safe away.

A secret dread now came upon the King,  
 He saw one peril past, and tho’ he strove  
 To dissipate all fear, he could but view,

That morning, as a presage of worse ills, 100  
 Approaching fast. Contemplating he stood,  
 And to himself in serious mood thus spake:  
 ' This hour my life is spared, from unlook'd cause,—  
 ' Sudden deception! May it not succeed  
 ' Hereafter? 'Tis a garb I have not worn! 105  
 ' Yet when my country calls for sacrifice,  
 ' Shall I deny her? Heaven vouchsafe his aid!  
 ' This be my plan! Hence meet I undismay'd,  
 ' All perils and all circumstance!'

He now

Drew near the foe, and when he saw their tents, 110  
 And knew that he was mark'd by Danes, he cried,  
 ' Danger before me stands, but death behind.'

He pass'd the centinel, who saw his Harp,  
 Nor doubted danger. Through the ranks he sped,  
 Like one who business sought. Now bolder grown,  
 He on his Harp play'd cheerily, and soon,  
 Full many a Dane around the minstrel stood,  
 And listen'd joyous, when, one cried aloud,  
 ' Is not this man a Saxon? Dreads he not  
 ' The Danish camp?' Another thus replied: 120  
 ' A Saxon truly, but a man who cares,  
 ' For neither Dane or Saxon; thee or me,  
 ' So he may eat and live.'

## His cheerful song

Now ALFRED ceased,—and as the custom was,  
 Like humble suppliant, of the listeners round 125  
 Ask'd slender pittance.

‘What would'st thou receive?’

One pleasantly inquired; ‘We have our swords,  
 ‘And bucklers and good darts, which thee might strike  
 ‘When at some distance. But if aught beside  
 ‘Thou of us seek, first play again.’

## The King, 130

Striving to gain their smiles by courtesy,  
 Heard, and his Harp to other cadence strung;  
 Then sought for recompence. The frowning Dane  
 Seized his long beard, and cried, ‘Thou wand'ring  
 knave!

‘Ask only for that instantaneous death 135  
 ‘Thou well deserv'st.’ When grasping the King's  
 Harp,

He would have dash'd it down, but ALFRED cried,  
 ‘Take not a poor man's bread! his only store,  
 ‘With which he cheats his sorrows. Yield that Harp,  
 ‘Useless to thee, to me most dear.’

## The Dane, 140

As ALFRED spake, to banter with his smiles,

Awhile forbore, and when the King had ceased,  
 He rais'd again his arm. That instant pass'd  
 GUTHRUM the Danish Chieftain. Near he came,  
 And viewing well the instrument, inquired, 145  
 Who own'd it, and the cause of that sad voice,  
 Which struck his ear.

ALFRED beheld the Chief,  
 And drawing nigh, replied, kneeling to earth,  
 ' It is thy servant's! Pity me, my Lord!  
 ' A stranger, and to me restore yon Harp!' 150  
 ' Who art thou? cried the Dane, and wherefore here?'

' I am a simple man,' the King replied,  
 ' Who loves sweet minstrelsy ; and oft at eve,  
 ' In lonely wanderings, by the slow brook's side,  
 ' I pass my time. And when the stars are up, 155  
 ' And I can hear the night-birds whistling loud,  
 ' I touch my Harp, to solemn music, sounds,  
 ' That give the air a stillness. I have seen,  
 ' High in the heavens, the moon suspend her course,  
 ' To listen to my strains, whilst the proud trees,  
 ' So lofty over head, have hush'd their noise,  
 ' And only to the loud gale bent themselves,  
 ' When I have ceased. There is my gentle Harp,  
 ' And if I ne'er should gain it, I must roam,  
 ' Mourning, this land about ; or, in a bark, 165



' Sail up and down the ocean, calling loud  
 ' On my lost friend ; or, roused to fiercer wrath,  
 ' Whene'er the stars of night, shoot their red balls,  
 ' Fly after them, and ere their flight hath ceased,  
 ' Seize, and direct their unextinguish'd course 170  
 ' To him who robb'd me.'

GUTHRUM cried, ' Poor man !

' A wand'ring Lunatic that here hath stray'd  
 ' Unconscious. Instant yield the Harp, oh Dane !  
 ' For tho' we war on Saxons, we will spare  
 ' Whom 'Gods have warr'd on.' ALFRED took the  
 Harp, 175

And bending to the Chief, with thankful heart,  
 Pursued his dangerous way.

With cautious eye,  
 He mark'd the Danes, their number, and their state ;  
 Proud in their force, of victory confident,  
 Incautious grown, and scorning their weak foe. 180

Now of his Queen he thought, and that her ear  
 Might catch some sound, some desultory note,  
 He touch'd the Harp, and thus, disconsolate,  
 Sang as he play'd. ' Oh thou my soul's desire,  
 ' Where'er thou art, come forth and let me see 185  
 ' Thy long-lost countenance.'

The men who stray'd,  
 With the wild harper, heard, and thus exclaim'd :  
 ' He calleth now the moon, but he shall call  
 ' For many an hour, ere from her distant course,  
 ' She answer him.' Again he struck the Harp, 190  
 Veiling his song in words of mystery.

' Life of my life and spirit pure as heaven,  
 ' Come forth and see thy minstrel ! Sick at heart  
 ' He wanders through the sea and earth and air  
 ' To meet thy glance beloved ! Look around, 195  
 ' And ease his pain, who never joy hath felt  
 ' Since thou didst leave him. From the clouds  
     above,  
 ' Appear, beloved ! from yon purple cloud,  
 ' Behold me faithful still, nor let me more,  
 ' Wander through earth in lonely misery.' 200

Now to the gate he came, and would have pass'd,  
 But one, resisting, said, ' Stranger thy name ?'

' My name.' replied the King, ' is with the moon,  
 ' And sun, and stars. Upon the rainbow bright,  
 ' Laughing I stride, and when the night draws near,  
 ' Upon the beach I roam, to pick the shells,  
 ' Or, on the star-fish, read my name, and sing,  
 ' How I was young and loved a beauteous maid,

‘ Now far away.’

One drawing near exclaim'd,

‘ A wand'ring lunatic, whom GUTHRUM's self 210

‘ Bade us respect.’ Then through the gate he pass'd,

Harping and chaunting cheerily, whilst crouds

Fast follow'd him to see so strange a sight.

Again he sang. ‘ Oh show thy lovely face !

‘ Charmer come forth, and bless me with the sight

‘ So long desired. Upon yon silver cloud

‘ Let me behold thee, so shall endless joy

‘ Bound at my heart, and I will laugh aloud,

‘ And sing, as now I sing, my cares away.’

When the King ceased his melancholy song, 220

A Damsel from the castle came, and cried :

‘ Harper, haste hither.’ ALFRED heard a voice,

And, looking round, beheld her. At the words,

He stopp'd, leaving the croud, 'mong whom he stood,

And follow'd her alone.

It was the hall 225

Whereto they went. She cried, ‘ Harper sing forth

‘ To sooth the sorrow's of yon woman's heart,

‘ Who sits beside the fire—nursing her cares

‘ From morning e'en 'till night.’ ALFRED look'd

round,—

He saw **ALSWITHA** !

By the hearth she sat, 230  
 And, at the fire, intensely gazing, saw,  
 Or seem'd to see, semblance of friend beloved,  
 Nor of the harper knew, nor who, around,  
 Cared any thing, so she might sit and gaze  
 In idle contemplation.

**ALFRED** play'd, 235  
 The song which they had sung in happier days:—  
 She knew the tune ! when casting a quick glance  
 At him, beside, the harper, she exclaim'd—  
 ' What man art thou ? ' When, fixing his clear eye,  
 Full at her, he pronounced no word. She saw ! 240  
 She knew the King ! and, shudd'ring, turn'd away,  
 Whilst her big heart throbb'd loud. The damsel saw  
 The sudden change of countenance both shew'd,  
 The terror, the surprise, and, as she look'd  
 Around the hall, grown darker, from the night 245  
 Approaching slow, and saw the pale blue fire ;  
 The shadowy world of beings rose ; she seem'd  
 Half conscious of some intellectual strife ;  
 And dim conjectures so o'erpower'd her mind  
 With forms and shapes ideal, that she stood, 250  
 Trembling, 'till grown suspicious of herself,  
 The place, and all around her, from the hall

**She fled precipitate.**

Most like the youth,  
 Who through the church-yard roams at dead of  
 night,  
 And when he to the middle path draws nigh, 255  
 Determines not to fear, yet fears the more  
 For all his resolutions ; 'till at length  
 Aerial phantoms dance before his eyes,  
 And all creation leagues to stir his soul ;  
 When, to imagined fears resign'd, he seeks 260  
 Safety in flight, and faster for his speed  
 Thinks Fiends pursuing.

So the damsel rush'd  
 From out the hall, and cried, to those she saw,  
 ' What man is this that ye have hither brought ?  
 ' My heart doth quake.' The waiting band replied,  
 ' It is a Saxon harper, wandering here  
 ' In his mad fits of lunacy. No harm  
 ' Hath he achieved ?' ' No harm,' the damsel said,  
 ' But I do fear again to enter there,  
 ' Go ye and bring him forth.' Then many a Dane  
 Rush'd in, and, looking round, the minstrel saw  
 Kneeling before the woman, him they dragg'd  
 From out the hall. ALSWITHA saw the sight,  
 And trembled as her death-call she had heard.

Like famished birds around their prey, the Danes  
 Again encircled ALFRED, crying loud,  
 ' A song, O Harper. !' Said the weary King  
 ' This evening spare me ; on the coming morn,  
 ' Your will, be mine ; now must I rest myself.'  
 Yet vain had been his pleadings, had not sounds,  
 Well known, the Danes required, instant to join  
 Their nightly tents. Then ALFRED stretch'd himself,  
 Heart-sick and weary, on the chilling ground :  
 And when the tempest of his mind seem'd hush'd,  
 And sleep advancing, on the midnight gale, 290  
 Shouts of loud mirth, were heard, and revelry.  
 When ALFRED thus look'd up to Heaven, and spake :

' Parent and Guardian of all mortal things !  
 ' The Seraphim and Worm, thou se'st alike !—  
 ' Thou seest me, oh Father ! Thou behold'st 295  
 ' All living things ! Thy power it was which screen'd  
 ' ISAAC from death. Thine arm hath oft appear'd  
 ' For Patriarch and Prophet, men who placed  
 ' Their confidence in Thee ! Almighty Sire !  
 ' Screen me in this dark hour !'

'Mid hopes and fears,  
 Again on earth the King reclined his head,  
 And, sleepless, linger'd 'till the morning light.

END OF BOOK XIV.

## ALFRED. BOOK XV.

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 ARGUMENT.

*Alfred's Visit to the Danish Camp continued.*

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‘ **HUBBA**, restrain thy wrath!’ **IVAR** exclaim’d,  
 ‘ Nor thus indulge insatiate thirst of blood.  
 ‘ Thy words are frantic ! Thou dost let revenge  
 ‘ All other thoughts absorb. Ere yet too late,  
 ‘ And ruin close, what madness first began, 5  
 ‘ Curb thy proud spirit !’ **HUBBA** thus replied.

‘ Tho’ older and entitled to receive  
 ‘ Respect from me, thy brother, yet this hour  
 ‘ Laughs at all duties. Let the man revolve  
 ‘ On niceties of right and wrong, who lolls 10  
 ‘ On langour’s pillow, and hath never felt  
 ‘ The wrongs I feel. Is **HUBBA** not a man ?  
 ‘ A prince ? and owns he not a character,  
 ‘ Freeborn, and prising courage more than life ?  
 ‘ Rememb’rest thou thy father ? how he scorn’d 15

' The dastard's spirit ? what he bore to gain  
 ' The hero's name ? and in what flood-like wrath  
 ' Whelm'd each presumptuous foe ? Shall I, his son,  
 ' Of him forgetful, see another's sword  
 ' Hang over me, and let the greedy hour           20  
 ' Of vengeance sleep ?

' Yes !' Ivar answered, ' Sleep !  
 ' Forever sleep !—My mind misgives itself !  
 ' I see this kindling spirit, and suspect  
 ' All is not right. Thou tellest me this isle  
 ' Stoops to me ;—that the vanquished Saxons fly  
 ' On every side ; Yet, wherefore should it be,  
 ' That, conquering, unresisted, we behold  
 ' Denmark's proud fleet, soon as we reach'd this isle,  
 ' Flames overwhelm ? To my unquiet mind  
 ' It ill forebodeth ; and I deem our state,           30  
 ' Spite of thy words, unsafe ! We have a foe,  
 ' Wary, and with mysterious plottings fill'd ;—  
 ' Therefore more dreaded. Dost thou never hope  
 ' To reach thy native country, and receive  
 ' Some favor'd Fair, the fruit of all thy toil ?       35  
 ' Check then thy wrath ! It is a dragon fierce,  
 ' That will o'ercome thee, if thou yet disdain  
 ' These faithful words.

' I see most manifest  
 ' We ne'er shall crown our conquests with this isle,



' If discord visit us. Ours must be zeal, 40  
 ' United zeal, and to one point alone  
 ' Our aims all turn'd—the death of Britain's King—  
 ' ALFRED! our one unconquer'd foe! the man  
 ' Who keeps our swords at bay, and while unseen  
 ' Laughs us to scorn ; yet o'er his head there hangs  
 ' Certain destruction. HUBBÁ, mark my words.  
 ' If we indulge dissensions, and divide  
 ' That spirit which alone can win the land,  
 ' How stand we then?—dishearten'd, and the prey  
 ' Of these our hated foes. But I would hope, 50  
 ' Thy mind too brave to pore on selfish wrongs,  
 ' Heedless of these our people. Should we fail  
 ' To do our duty, and in private broils  
 ' Forget the common cause, what will await  
 ' Thy father's warriors? and, as brave a host 55  
 ' As ever hurl'd the lance.'

HUBBA replied,  
 ' Thy words I hear, and when I GUTHRUM meet,  
 ' My deeds shall answer thee. The time is past!  
 ' Why stays he! Never long'd I more to try  
 ' My might in battle, than I now desire 60  
 ' To measure swords with GUTHRUM.'

' What that noise?'

IVAR exclaim'd, uprising, ' to mine ear,

‘Melodious music.’ One drew nigh and said,  
 ‘A Saxon harper, crazed, who here doth roam.’

‘A Harper! and a Saxon! Bid him in!’ 63  
 Cried IVAR. In the hall then ALFRED came!  
 He stood before the Danes, who sternly eyed  
 The vent’rous Monarch, when the Chieftain cried,

‘Saxon! how cam’st thou here? What antidote  
 ‘Hast thou against our swords? The King replied,  
 (Forced to the stratagem, his heart disdain’d)

‘When the black Raven caws, and in the air  
 ‘Witches and wand’ring sprites their revels keep,  
 ‘Loud-laughing, with this instrument I raise  
 ‘Celestial melodies. Heard you last eve 75  
 ‘The stars and stately moon, rejoicing, swell  
 ‘My earthly chorus?’ Wond’ring look’d the Danes.  
 ALFRED continued. ‘Mid’ the ocean waves,  
 ‘Where, in his greatness huge Behemoth swims,  
 ‘Shaking the depths of ocean, I abide, 80  
 ‘The solitary monarch of the flood.  
 ‘What thing is that? behold it! there! a Crane?  
 ‘Nay, by my Harp, it is a sorcerer’s wand.  
 ‘The time! what is it? Ah! what art thou there?  
 ‘Sweet innocent, a child! Nay spare his tears!  
 ‘Come thou with me!’

When, through the door, the King  
 Essay'd to pass, anxious to leave the tent,  
 With his imagined guest, but HUBBA cried,  
 Withhold ! and, turning, spake. ' This frantic man,  
 ' Whence came he ? his strange looks, and words  
     so wild, 90  
 ' Might check our doubts, but that I oft have found,  
 ' Reputed fools, wiser than some who charge  
 ' The fool with folly. Saxon ! say, thy name,  
 ' And if thou know'st of ALFRED.'

Thus the King :

(Who heard the Dane's suspicions, and essay'd, 95  
 With wilder words, to root them from his mind.)  
 ' What is my name ? what is the sea-surf call'd  
 ' At midnight ? and who stops to count the sands  
 ' When the waves roar ? See you yon louring cloud ?  
 ' Hear you the noise that through the elements, 100  
 ' Bursts on, and makes the gazer's cheek turn pale—  
 ' The lightnings learn to pity ? Up and down,  
 ' Up to the clouds, down to the ocean's bed,  
 ' Nightly I go, and when the parted waves  
 ' Make bare the sea-rocks leaves, I tear them off  
 ' And round my Harp, bind them as now you see."  
 ' Where is thy King ? Brawler !' the Chief  
     exclaim'd:

ALFRED, to touch some other cord within,

Terror or Superstition, thus replied—

In graver accent, and with look austere. 110

‘Where is *my* King, did’st thou inquire? oh man!—

‘Beneath the earth ; down in her central caves !

‘Shall I my hand extend and bid him rise—

‘Fierce as the midnight wolf, to look around

‘On you and me ? Or shall I to the grave 115

‘Instant descend, or, to the depths of Hell !

‘Where oft I go, and, with my potent word,

‘Arouse the earthquake?’

HURBA cried, ‘Forbear!

‘Call not thy King!’ when, turning, thus he said,

‘Slowly, to IVAR, ‘This mysterious man, 120

‘I like him not! ask for no other words;

‘But let him leave our tent, and with him take

‘Our mildest accents.’ IVAR thus replied:

‘Lose not thyself! tho’ evil spirits walk,

‘And teaze mankind with sore perplexities, 125

‘This is no spirit! By his uncouth words,

‘I see the wand’ring Lunatic. His looks

‘Plainly tell this. But tho’ he may not talk,

‘He well may play. Harper! some cheerful tune,

‘To soothe our anger.’

As the King his Harp

Raised to his ear, GUTHRUM threw wide the door  
 And enter'd in, vindictive. In his eye  
 He bore fierce meaning.

With a tongue that hid  
 All deadly plans, HUBBA the Chief address'd.  
 ' GUTHRUM, we long have waited, and thy zeal,  
 ' So boasted of, had taught us to expect  
 ' More certain proofs; but I forget myself!  
 ' I did not mean to question thy good zeal;  
 ' As well might I suspect this heart, that now  
 ' Beats with one purpose.

' Tho', when late we met,  
 ' Our words ran loud, and we in idle talk  
 ' Question'd each other's courage, and had nigh  
 ' Handled our swords, yet 'twas a childish thing.  
 ' GUTHRUM, to tell the truth, thou well didst speak!  
 ' And since thy boyish days, thou hast been known,  
 ' To shine far better in thy deeds than words.  
 ' Say I not right?'

When GUTHRUM thus: ' Thou dost.  
 ' My plan is this. All others I respect,  
 ' But I have learnt, most to respect myself;  
 ' And never to receive from lord or slave, 150  
 ' Charges, or light, or heavy, but this sword

C

'Hath weigh'd their truth. I am content to serve  
 'Thee, my young Prince, as I have wont to do,  
 'With due allegiance; yet, there is within  
 'This veteran breast, a heart that reverences 155  
 'Its duties to another, and, itself.  
 'I am thy friend again, receive my hand!

'Most willing,' HUBBA cried. 'We both are  
 friends.'

When, with a downcast look, yet cheerful voice,  
 He further spake, 'We here are met, to name 160  
 'What best may serve our cause. I need not tell  
 'Thee, GUTHRUM! what the customs of our land,  
 'Preceding battle, and how well it suits  
 'Mortals to deprecate the frowns of heaven  
 'Ere they commence the fight. To me it seems  
 'Proper to sacrifice some victim; nay,  
 'And that of human kind, thus, as beseems,  
 'Pleasing the gods. What thinkest thou? oh Chief!'

GUTHRUM replied, 'Most wise! some blood  
 should flow.'

'If blood must flow,' said HUBBA, 'thou would'st  
 chuse, 170  
 'Doubtless, a victim of such sort, that gods  
 'Might smile beneficent, and in our cause  
 'Take more than common interest. Speak I well?'

‘ Truly,’ said GUTHRUM. HUBBA thus exclaimed:  
 With eye that darted instantaneous fire. 175  
 ‘ If well I speak, then, by thy patriot zeal !  
 ‘ By all the ardour, in the Danish cause  
 ‘ Thou oft hast boasted ! By Valhalla’s halls—  
 ‘ I claim thy CAPTIVE !—Look not thus amazed !  
 ‘ But if sincerity thy breast hath sway’d, 180  
 ‘ Answer me, yes !

‘ No ! by the gods above !’  
 Cried GUTHRUM. ‘ She shall never bleed !’ My  
 word,—  
 ‘ My oath is with her, and when GUTHRUM fails  
 ‘ His solemn promise, then shall man renounce  
 ‘ All faith, and Surtur’s\* reign draw near.’ 185

Whilst rage  
 Prey’d on his heart, HUBBA with placid mien  
 Thus answer’d. ‘ GUTHRUM thou art wise and  
 brave—  
 ‘ Thus much thy foes confess, and thou wilt soon,

\* The Danes entertained the most dreadful apprehensions  
 of the reign of Surtur. Surtur, the adversary of Odin, was  
 supposed to live in a burning world, called Muspelsheim, and  
 was ordained at some distant time to break loose and destroy  
 the father of the gods. Prior to this event it was believed  
 that iniquity would prevail through the whole earth.

- ‘ Check this thy warmth, and see most plain, how  
right  
‘ To sacrifice this Captive. ’Tis a thing 190  
‘ So needful, that thy well-experienced mind  
‘ *Must* yield, there is no choice.’

When GUTHRUM thus:

- ‘ No choice! I tell thee, HUBBA! tho’ thy voice  
‘ Came with a god’s solemnity, and Heaven  
‘ Pledaded thy cause; I would regard it all  
‘ As doth the King of Birds, the winds that roar  
‘ Around his giddy dwelling. If a heart,  
‘ A human victim, must on altar bleed,  
‘ Let IVAR speak, and with a band of Danes  
‘ Forth will I search the country, and provide, 200  
‘ Hundreds like her to temporize with fate.  
‘ But, by.th’ immortal gods! By this my sword!  
‘ By ODIN’s self! my captive shall not die.’

GUTHRUM’s proud speech and purpose resolute  
Added new force to HUBBA’s latent ire. . . 205  
He cried. ‘ Thou Cormorant of haughtiness!  
‘ Who gave *thee* grace before thy Prince to stand  
‘ And say what *shall* be? who endued *thy* words  
‘ To fix the bounds of fate, and of thyself  
‘ Give life and death? Thine oath—I heed it not!  
‘ And as the sun omnipotent now shines,



‘ So shall thy Captive perish.’

With an eye,  
 Steady as solar beam, GUTHRUM thus spake.  
 ‘ Thy wrath is great, but I will answer thee,  
 ‘ Cool, from my conscious right, not cowardice.—  
 ‘ Tho’ nurst in wars, and mark’d with many a scar  
 ‘ From hostile sword—Tho’ by thy father’s side  
 ‘ I on the Lapland mountains met the foe,  
 ‘ Where the white smoke-frosts rose and ice-pil’d crags  
 ‘ Shone in their sumptuous dress, our only guide 220  
 ‘ The blasted Fir—some solitary tree,  
 ‘ That here and there appear’d ’mid nature’s grave,  
 ‘ Warning the foot of hardy traveller ;  
 ‘ Tho’ in these scenes, by REGNER’s side, I fought  
 ‘ And nobly conquer’d ; on the tall rock’s brow,  
 ‘ Sending our feats down to posterity\*  
 ‘ In living glory—making snows my bed,  
 ‘ And ice my pillow—whilst our swords were dyed,  
 ‘ In gallant blood, chieftains and warriors brave ;  
 ‘ Yet thou disdainest all—these deeds are o’er !—  
 ‘ When, at thy sire’s untimely death, I stood  
 ‘ First in command, I look’d around and saw

\* Inscriptions are still to be found on some of the highest rocks of Scandinavia, left there by the warriors of former ages, commemorating their exploits.

' His youthful boys, and in my heart I swore  
 ' True fealty! Swore I then in vain? Thou know'st  
 ' This shield hath screen'd thee! This good arm  
     hath sav'd 235

' Thy infant head, 'mid perils numberless,  
 ' When all thy false friends flew. Since thou arriv'dst  
 ' In Britain, have I sheath'd my sword, and stood  
 ' An idle gazer? Have I not display'd  
 ' Spirit untam'd, and in this tardy strife, 240  
 ' Stood forth in every hour, unterrified,  
 ' Where danger most appear'd? If this be true,  
 ' Such long-tried services might pride itself,  
 ' Or look at least for something like a smile  
 ' Of fair complacency, from thee, young Prince!  
 ' But thou hast lightly deem'd these benefits,  
 ' And, with a soul unmanly, dared insult  
 ' An aged warrior, thou hast dared suspect  
 ' My heart's integrity! Now hear me, Chief!  
 ' Tho' old in warfare, still do I possess 250  
 ' A sinewy hand that yet can grasp the sword.  
 ' HUBBA! I tell thee, 'till my head lie low,  
 ' Tho' Valhall's gods in long succession came  
 ' To ask this victim—she shall never fall!

' Proud dotard!' HUBBA cried, 'Take thy rash  
     words! 255  
 ' I scorn them! As the savage bear pursues

' The murd'rer of her young ones, so will I—  
 ' Thy Captive! and tho' death before me stood,  
 ' Press on—such is my hate of thee! But words  
 ' Suit not my purpose! This triumphant sword,  
 ' Shall deal her death-wound!' As he to the door  
 Rush'd furious. GUTHRUM seiz'd him and exclaim'd,  
 ' HUBBA! what word was that?'

Their swords are drawn!  
 When IVAR sprang between and cried, ' Forbear!  
 Whilst at the murd'rous man, the Harper frown'd,  
 Unseen, and rais'd his Harp, as he would strike,  
 Unconscious what he did.

With wiser wrath,  
 Each warrior sheath'd his sword, when HUBBA cried:  
 ' Wrongs upon wrongs, must I for ever bear?  
 ' GUTHRUM! thy blood or mine, this foul offence  
 ' Alone shall heal! We will not thus with words  
 ' Fight always! But, enough, now IVAR speak!  
 ' Thou art our proper leader! Now decide  
 ' Between thy brother and that haughty man—  
 ' GUTHRUM, thy country's foe.'

When IVAR spake:  
 ' To me it is portentous of all ill,  
 ' Cut off from succour, and about to try

‘ Our might with ALFRED, to behold you thus  
 ‘ With broils inglorious waste those thoughts, that zeal  
 ‘ The Saxons call for. Shall we by such deeds 280  
 ‘ Britain subdue, and to our homes return  
 ‘ Laden with honors? HUBBA, thou art rash!  
 ‘ GUTHRUM, too bold! Am I your leader named  
 ‘ To learn my weakness, and behold your words  
 ‘ Guide me, who, child-like, need such foreign aid?  
 ‘ I am myself alone! I heed ye not—  
 ‘ HUBBA nor GUTHRUM!

‘ Ere the fight begin,  
 ‘ ’Tis meet some victim fall, and, right I deem,  
 ‘ Thy Captive, GUTHRUM!—Is there one beside,  
 ‘ A Saxon in our camp? Yea! there is one— 290  
 ‘ Yon crazy Harper. Instant seize! His blood  
 ‘ Shall stay your mutual wrath!’ ‘ Aye! GUTHRUM  
     cried,  
 ‘ Let *him* be sacrificed!

HUBBA exclaim’d,  
 ‘ Nay! but thy Captive suffers! I will have  
 ‘ No blood but hers. She is the destin’d gift 295  
 ‘ From Danes to Gods, and as thy brother lives,  
 ‘ So shall she die!’

IVAR replied, ‘ ’Tis well!

‘HUBBA, thou speakest right. Her blood *shall* flow!’

GUTHRUM then smote his breast and looking up,  
 Heard IVAR say: ‘But stop! to shun myself, 300  
 ‘That rashness which in you so ill I deem,  
 ‘I will not now determine; when night comes,  
 ‘Then in this tent meet all! and we will speak  
 ‘Plain to this subject. As we then resolve,  
 ‘So shall the deed take place, for if to death 305  
 ‘We doom the Captive—by our torches’ light,  
 ‘Forth will we lead her, and may gods receive  
 ‘Th’ appeasing blood!’

HUBBA transported cried,  
 ‘This is most brave, most brotherly, most wise!  
 ‘IVAR, thou hast my thanks! yet one word more.  
 ‘Favor’d I feel myself, but I would ask  
 ‘An equal favor.—Let the Captive stand,  
 ‘Here in this tent, upon th’ approaching eve,  
 ‘While we debate, so shall we mark her look,  
 ‘And feast our eyes upon her growing terrors!’ 315

‘Monster, away!’ th’ indignant GUTHRUM cried.  
 ‘Shame of thy race! blot of thy father’s fame!  
 ‘Insult a woman? Make a Captive stand—  
 ‘One whom the wars have giv’n, and view her chains,  
 ‘Preparing at the forge!—The molten steel, 320

‘ Soon to become a dagger, through her heart  
 ‘ To force its way?—Is thy name HUBBA?’

‘ Flames

‘ Light on thee! May the scorpion’s venom bathe  
 ‘ Thy soul eternal! Foaming, HUBBA cried.  
 ‘ I would consume thy spirit! IVAR, speak, 325  
 ‘ The power is thine—thou art the strength of Danes!  
 ‘ Say to yon man, who fain would grasp all rule,  
 ‘ And, as I soberly suspect, who now,  
 ‘ E’en meditates our fall—say to yon man,  
 ‘ Thy Captive shall be present!’

IVAR cried, 230

‘ Thy Captive shall be present! She shall hear  
 ‘ Whilst we decide.’

When, brooding as the cloud  
 That leads the storm on, GUTHRUM left the tent,  
 Whom HUBBA follow’d; and as ALFRED rose  
 IVAR beheld, and spake: ‘ Mark simple man! 335  
 ‘ Tho’ thou dost talk so wild, yet with thy Harp  
 ‘ Thou playest sweetly, and, lest words arise  
 ‘ That need thy soothing—be thou here anon!’  
 Which said, the Harper, trembling, pass’d the door.

END OF BOOK XV.

## ALFRED. BOOK XVI.

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 ARGUMENT.

*Alfred's Visit to the Danish Camp continued.*

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‘ **W**ELL met!’ cried **IVAR**. ‘Here we all appear,  
 ‘ But, where the Captive? she whose fate hath caus’d  
 ‘ This bitter strife.’

He scarce had said, when lo !

**ALSWITHA** enter’d, pensive, whilst her eye,  
 All sorrowful, gleam’d through the crystal tear.    5  
 She cast a wilder’d look, slow through the tent,  
 And tho’ her frame was still, her heart throbb’d fast,  
 For there, disguised, stood **ALFRED**. He beheld  
 And trembled; every joint relax’d; such doubts  
 Rush’d through him, that, of all around, he seem’d,  
 Dubious, if most partaking of the world  
 Ideal or material, as may feel  
 Th’ unbodied spirit that at first forsakes

This life, and mingles with the unseen world.  
When HUBBA rose, and cried,

‘IVAR, behold! 15

‘There is the Captive, GUTHRUM vainly strives  
‘To screen from death; but, by the sword I wield,  
‘Death shall o’ertake her, and the gods receive,  
‘Before th’ approaching morn, her destin’d blood.’

The gentle Zephyr, that upon the wave  
Disports himself, and o’er the rippling flood, 20  
Delighted bears some vessel, freighted rich  
With human excellence, feels not more grief  
And cutting anguish, when, with potent word,  
The Genius of the Ocean, bids him haste  
To other regions, and resign his charge 25  
To the fierce North-wind, that with bellowing rage  
Soon shall assault the bark, and in the waves  
Ingulph the whole,—than felt the King, to think  
He govern’d not, but one, a Dane, whose soul  
Blood only charm’d.

ALSWITHA silent stood, 30

Feeling had left her, and her eye display’d  
The vacancy of death. When GUTHRUM cried:  
(Bursting with wrath, that thus an utterance found:)



- ' HUBBA ! more black thy heart than night o'ercast  
 ' With hideous tempests, when no moon appears,  
 ' And every star, fearful, withdraws. Thy soul  
 ' Feeds only on revenge, and thy dark mind  
 ' Ever displays, like Finmark's gloomy wastes,  
 ' All desolate, winds or the beating rain.—  
 ' Thou hast no sun within ! Thy manly front 40  
 ' But pictures some fair forest's loftiest boughs,  
 ' Displaying health and verdure, whilst beneath,  
 ' Far out of sight, 'mid noxious vapours damp,  
 ' Lie desolation, mildew, waste, and death !  
 ' Tho' from its heinous and monstrous kind, 45  
 ' Few might thy motive doubt, I know the cause  
 ' Which makes thee GUTHRUM's foe ! which fills  
     thy breast  
 ' With venom fierce, and of no earthly kind :  
 ' But thou shalt strive in vain ! She shall not die  
 ' To glut thy vengeance ! I have vow'd, have sworn,  
 ' Her to protect ; this tongue hath pledged itself  
 ' With oaths so full and of such import deep,  
 ' That whilst this eye can see, this sword resist,  
 ' Yon Captive stands secure !'

When, IVAR spake,

- ' GUTHRUM, I know thee not ! Thy words and looks  
 ' So change thy character, that I suspect  
 ' Some fiend of hell hath borrow'd this thy shape

' With which to spout its fury. Know, oh man!  
 ' Ivar, not Guthrum, rules in Britain's Isle.  
 ' Thy haughty words befit not even *thee*, 60  
 ' Tho' old and in thy country's wars renown'd.  
 ' If for our common good, the gods demand  
 ' A victim of high blood; where is there one,  
 ' As her I see, so proper? Hast thou not  
 ' Oftimes declared that from her form, and mien,  
 ' Her language and deportment, that thou knew'st  
 ' Thy Captive of no common origin? \*  
 ' These oft have been thy sayings! and to shew  
 ' Resentment for thy words, here do I swear,  
 ' By all the gods in Valhall—she shall die! 70

Not paler look'd the Babylonian King,  
 BELSHAZZAR, when upon the walls he saw  
 The finger guided by an arm unseen,  
 Than look'd ALSWITHA. GUTHRUM thus replied:

' With thee, oh Chieftain! vain it were to strive:  
 ' Thou hast all power! yet do I feel my wrongs  
 ' Hard on me! Is it this for which my life  
 ' Hath borne the battle? Have I fought from youth,  
 ' Even to these grey hairs, to have at last

\* It was a maxim with the Danes, that, the more noble the victim, the greater the probability of pleasing the gods.

' One little boon denied me, and receive 80  
 ' At this unlook'd-for time my full reward ?  
 ' One thing I yet may do ! These hands have now  
 ' Warr'd long enough ; and from this fatal hour,  
 ' Sheath'd is my sword ! upon the Saxon foe,  
 ' Never to light again ! The strife is o'er ! 85  
 ' Now take the Victim ! let her blood be shed !  
 ' Go forth and conquer in full confidence  
 ' That gods approve the deed ! One path is now  
 ' Left for old GUTHRUM, and I swear to sail  
 ' Instant to Denmark.'

HUBBA shouted, ' Sail ! 90  
 ' We heed thee not—thy threats or services !  
 ' We are a host ourselves !'

IVAR exclaim'd ;  
 ' Lead forth the Victim ! Bring the sacred knife !  
 ' Prepare the bowl ! and let her streaming blood  
 ' Flow to the midnight torch !'

ALSWITHA heard, 95  
 And, at the Chieftain's sentence, ' Lead her forth,'  
 A gentle sleep her senses overcast ;—  
 Low on the ground she sank : Then, HUBBA sprang,  
 Grasp'd her resistless arm, and forth assay'd  
 To bear her from the tent, when IVAR cried, 100

' Withhold! I have one question first to ask.  
 ' GUTHRUM, attend! Became yon Captive thine  
 ' In lawful fight, or didst thou meet with her,  
 ' When peaceful, and remote from wars and strife ?'

GUTHRUM faint hope received, and eager cried,  
 ' By all the gods we serve, illustrious Chief!  
 ' Fighting, I found her not.\* No fruit of war  
 ' Was yonder Captive. Her I overtook  
 ' At early morn, when pacing quietly  
 ' Her sober way.'

IVAR then knit his brow: 110  
 Conflicting thoughts seem'd labouring in his breast.  
 Awhile he ponder'd; when, ALSWITHA rose,  
 And gazing slowly round, spake not, yet cast  
 Th' accusing look, tho' witless, on the Chief.  
 This look awoke his wrath, that but required, 115  
 The pressure of a shadow, to burst forth  
 Untameable—Like that still pause in air,  
 When the dark elements are fill'd with mists

\* The women who attended armies, were considered as sharing the fight with their husbands, and in case of a defeat were often indiscriminately slaughtered by the victorious enemy. Many instances occurred among the Danes, of women fighting gallantly by the side of their husbands.

And pregnant clouds, 'till through the vaulted sky  
 The thunder rattles, when the world beneath, 120  
 Half deluged, hears the dread Contunder roar  
 That bursts heav'ns flood-gates.

Thus the Chieftain cried :

' Woman ! thy haughty mien, but ill deserves  
 ' Compassion, yet, it wrings me to the heart,  
 ' What most I hate, I fear me, I must shew.' 125  
 When lifting up her eye, **ALSWITHA** spake :  
 ' Haughty, my Lord ! within this trembling breast  
 ' There is no haughtiness, and if thou shew  
 ' Compassion to my pleading innocence —'

**HUBBA** exclaim'd, ' Compassion ! Hold thy peace !'  
 When turning to the Chief, he thus began.

' **IVAR**, my brother ! wouldst thou rescue thus  
 ' A worthless Captive, and expose our heads—  
 ' Thy head and mine— nay, all around our tent  
 ' To one o'erwhelming fate ? Recall thy words !  
 ' Pronounce ! and let me seize her and lead forth  
 ' To instant sacrifice.'

Then such suspense

**HUBBA** and **GUTHRUM**, and the Harper felt,  
 And she, **ALSWITHA**, as that wretched crew,  
 On India's despot shore, when, parch'd with thirst,

And deep immured in midnight horrible,—  
 Their very veins, starting from out their flesh,  
 And, boiling, as the dark blood flow'd within ;—  
 Then such suspense felt all around the Chief,  
 As Albion's sons endured, when having sent 145  
 A second time, in that sad hour, to learn  
 If still he slept, the Monster ! on whose rest  
 Hung their last hope of being.

IVAR cried,

' The fatal mandate, glad would I pronounce,  
 ' But there is one objection that, 'till now, 150  
 ' Struck not my mind. I cannot as I would !  
 ' I have an unimaginable dread  
 ' Of Powers invisible ! . Regard my words.

' Ere to the British Isle I urged my course,  
 ' As well befitted Dane, first I resolved 155  
 ' To seek the Sorceress. To the neighbouring shore,  
 ' Alone, I hasted, and upon the beach  
 ' Beheld a mariner ; aloud I cried,  
 ' Launch out thy bark ! and bear me to the spot  
 ' Where dwells the Oracle.

' I cannot go,' 160

' Slow he replied ; ' Behold the maddening surge '—  
 ' When strait I slew him. Having reach'd the Witch,

' She knew the deed, and chid me with such frowns,  
 ' Call'd up such legions of infernal forms,  
 ' And so o'erpower'd my sight with unknown shapes,  
 ' Terrific, that I vow'd, grasping my sword,  
 ' When to this land I came, never to shed  
 ' One drop of human blood, but what the wars  
 ' Gave me in lawful Captives. This I swore ;  
 ' And I so dread *her* frown, at the still hour 170  
 ' Of midnight, when all darkness is around ;  
 ' That I the oath must keep ! I have no choice !  
 ' That vow hath saved *her*. GUTHRUM, take thy  
 slave !"

Quick as the Panther leaps upon his prey,  
 GUTHRUM uprose and answer'd, " Chieftain, hail !  
 ' IVAR, I bid thee, hail ! and now behold  
 ' In me a friend indeed !"

As look'd the Fiend—  
 Hell's Monarch, when the Saviour to him cried,  
 Turning in his full might and majesty,  
 ' Get thee behind me, Satan !'—HUBBA look'd, 180  
 Fierce in his wrath, and muttering half-form'd words  
 Of direful import.

GUTHRUM, him approach'd  
 And mildly said, ' Good HUBBA ! I am glad,—

' Wherefore should'st thou be sorrowful? Such wrath  
 ' As thou indulgest ill befits a Prince, 185  
 ' And such determin'd vengeance. Thou hast shewn,  
 ' 'Till now, respect for women, and the hate  
 ' Thou bearest one, so gentle and so good,  
 ' Afflicts my spirit. I am old and grey,  
 ' But I remember once, my heart, like thine! 190  
 ' For as the withy throve where water was,  
 ' So I, 'mid strife; yet, tho' I know myself,  
 ' That hour is past. I now with cooler mind  
 ' Can judge our state, and for the common cause  
 ' Makesomething like concession.—Thesemy words.

' When first about the fleet, our swords were drawn,  
 ' Where was the cause of strife? for thee or me?  
 ' I fear'd not, thou the same; we both alike  
 ' Fear'd neither one the other: wherefore then  
 ' That passion and this agony of rage? 200  
 ' I am content to own, HUBBA my friend,  
 ' If thus the same, HUBBA of GUTHRUM says.  
 ' This is no time for jarring! we must join—  
 ' Speak I not, IVAR, right? both hand and heart  
 ' To meet these Saxons, and that first of men, 205  
 ' For courage, constancy, and deep designs—  
 ' ALFRED their King.'

IVAR exclaim'd, ' Right well !



‘ Brother, thy hand ! Receive our father’s friend !’  
 HUBBA uprose, and with feign’d fellowship  
 Clasp’d GUTHRUM, yet no word he spake : he look’d  
 As tho’ he brooded o’er revenge, not ripe,  
 Rankling within. When IVAR thus began :

‘ To see you friends, once more, makes me rejoice.  
 ‘ When the full time is past of rights revered,  
 ‘ Forth will we march to seek where hides the King,  
 ‘ The exiled ALFRED, whom our swords shall meet,  
 ‘ Our wrath o’erwhelm ! But now for merriment.  
 ‘ Harper ! thy song ! and let our lighten’d hearts  
 ‘ Dance to the laughing instrument.’ The King  
 Slowly uprose, and, singing, struck the harp. 220

‘ Danes, far renown’d o’er all the north, and  
 known

‘ To every wave of ocean—like the Pine,  
 ‘ Torn from the mountain’s base riding secure  
 ‘ Upon the foaming billow ; hear my song !—  
 ‘ Friendship is dear to man, the hour of strife 225  
 ‘ Bitter as wormwood to the heart that feels  
 ‘ And prizes friendship. I to nobler themes  
 ‘ Now tune my harp : I sing celestial Love !  
 ‘ Where’er thou art, best friend of human-kind,  
 ‘ There is all good, all harmony ; the heart 230  
 ‘ That truly loves, a mail’d defence doth wear

' That blunts all sorrow. Let each soul be true,  
 ' Of all that round me listen, to the vows  
 ' Preferred in happier times, and patient look  
 ' For future recompence. Such is the worth 235  
 ' Of heaven-descended Love, that nothing here,  
 ' E'en in the spacious world, hath magnitude  
 ' By which to tell its value ! Pearls and crowns  
 ' Are fleeting shadows, but affection true,  
 ' Constant and spotless, scorning time and place,  
 ' Lives and for ever lives, for 'tis the gift—  
 ' First and most precious of the gods to men!—  
 ' The Ocean that with raving mounts to Heaven,  
 ' And seems ordain'd through endless years to roll,  
 ' Forever troubled, soon shall stay his wrath. 245  
 ' Oh ye whose hearts Affection calls her own,  
 ' Heed not your sorrows ! soon the storm shall cease  
 ' Like Ocean in his fury.'

IVAR cried :

' Thy minstrelsy makes glad my heart  
 ' Were learned'st thou thy song ? Didst ever tread,  
 ' On distant Denmark, for it seems the same  
 ' Which I in mournful mood to FREDA spake  
 ' Ere I came hither.' HUBBA thus replied,  
 ' And I to THORIS.' Wildly cried the King,  
 (Supporting still the maniac's character) 255

' I ride upon the winds, or 'tween the waves,  
 ' And 'mid the howling storm, recline myself,  
 ' As all were quiet. Have you never heard  
 ' 'Mid forests deep the night-owl whoop to me ;  
 ' Or, from your native mountains seen on high 260  
 ' The eagle sailing, whilst ye heard afar  
 ' My harp in solitude, and straight beheld,  
 ' Check'd in his course, the eagle fall to earth,  
 ' Owning my sway?'

' Methinks I have,' replied

HUBBA, and slowly thus to IVAR spake. 265

' This fearful and most questionable thing,  
 ' For whether man or not, I would not say,  
 ' Cheats me of reason. IVAR ! bid him haste  
 ' From this our presence, for I fear me much,  
 ' Nay, I could swear by his long eye-lash black,  
 ' 'Tis LOK himself, that evil Deity  
 ' Whom gods and men abhor. He hath great power,  
 ' So we must treat him kindly.'

IVAR look'd

In dubious mood 'twixt doubt and certainty,  
 And thus replied. ' I never should have thought  
 ' That Harper, LOK ? No ! no ! it cannot be !  
 ' Thy brain is always working up itself  
 ' With groundless fancies. He is what he seems,

' A wand'ring Harper, whom some sore mishap  
 ' Hath lighted on, and his distemper'd brain . 280  
 ' Served as we witness.' Turning, thus the Chief :

' Thy Harp, good Harper, thou hast learn'd to touch,  
 ' With most bewitching tenderness; thy voice,  
 ' Form'd for thine instrument, hath to our minds  
 ' Call'd up sweet images, so clear and sweet, 285  
 ' That truly I could wish this warfare o'er,  
 ' That I might back to Denmark and exchange  
 ' The shadow for the substance : but, vain thoughts !  
 ' This is no time for love's soft witcheries.  
 ' Now we are friends, let us with speed prepare  
 ' To meet the fight, for as the husbandman  
 ' Tills ere he reaps and houses, so must we  
 ' First sow the seed in war, ALFRED first meet.  
 ' But yet before we part, one other song  
 ' Methinks might cheer us. Woman, take the Harp!  
 ' And let us hear if thou hast learn'd to touch  
 ' Soft notes like him thy country man.'

The Queen,  
 Blushing thus sang. ' Faint is my voice and harsh,  
 ' And feebly do I touch the minstrel chord,  
 ' Yet I will sing thy praises, Chieftain, thine 300  
 ' Who gav'st me life, and at this hour command'st  
 ' My harp to speak. Sweet is the harshest song

‘ That springs from gratitude, and I will strike  
 ‘ The Harp, albeit dissonant.’ Then she ceas’d  
 And to the Chieftain IVAR spake.

‘ My Lord, 305

‘ One song alone is mine; ’tis of a maid  
 ‘ Who on the wide seas saw her lover go,  
 ‘ And, wand’ring on the beach, to every wind  
 ‘ That waved her tresses, sang my humble song.  
 ‘ If thou would’st hear it, speak and I comply.’ 310  
 He cried, ‘ Proceed!’ When, trembling, she began.

‘ Beloved go! go o’er the briny sea,  
 ‘ And angels guard thee! When thou liest down,  
 ‘ May sometimes my soft image hover near.—  
 ‘ Forget not her who still remembers thee! 315  
 ‘ Go youth, beloved! go to thy last long home!  
 ‘ For, never more shall I behold thee! Go!  
 ‘ But soon the waves will swallow thee: the rocks  
 ‘ In fatal ambush lie. Oh think of me!  
 ‘ And if my life could screen thee from the storm,  
 ‘ Then were thy dangers o’er. Go, gentle youth!  
 ‘ Soul of my soul, and may the winds and waves  
 ‘ Pity my sorrows: may they guide thee back  
 ‘ To meet me, oh beloved! may they shew  
 ‘ Compassion for the tears I hourly shed, 325  
 ‘ And waft thee hither—waft thee to my arms.

D

' But if the destinies, beloved youth !  
 ' Should keep thee from my bosom, if the wars  
 ' Or stormy main should stop thee—still believe  
 ' That in my dreams by night, my thoughts by day,  
 ' Thou only dwellest—idol of my heart !  
 ' How cam'st thou where thou art ? Behold thy state !  
 ' Fly back beloved ! Dread thy mighty foes !  
 ' For death is near thee ! Trust not thou to chance  
 ' Thy precious being ! Instant, flee away !      335  
 ' But tho' thou long should'st lose me, thou shalt find,  
 ' If e'er thou see me more, my love the same,  
 ' My heart still pure ; and if far off I die,  
 ' Pity the maid who with her latest breath  
 ' Call'd on her True-love, and from Heaven implored  
 ' Blessings on him and his.'

She ceas'd the song,  
 Ivar uprose, and said, ' Now may we part.'  
 When to the tent there came a Spy, return'd  
 From wanderings far. Him Ivar saw, and cried ;  
 ' Say ! hast thou heard of ALFRED, or what force  
 ' Saxons now boast ?'

' I know it all, he cried,  
 ' I have seen ALFRED, and beheld the spot  
 ' Where now he is, where all the Saxons dwell ;  
 ' I know their haunts, their numbers, their designs,

All! all is mine!' With instantaneous voice 350  
 Each Chief replied, 'Declare it! tell thy tale,'—  
 When, thus he spake, turning to ALFRED nigh.

'What doth this harping man do here? I late,  
 'From yonder hill, beheld him on our camp,  
 'Gazing with curious eye.' HUBBA exclaim'd, 355  
 'Hold thy peace, *Dane!* Thy tale!' He thus began:

'We left you, mighty Princes! to find out  
 'Where ODDUNE fled, and where the Saxon King—  
 'ALFRED, conceal'd himself. We thought it well,  
 'Singly to journey. Thus, of all our band, 360  
 'Each took a different road. Through the dark night  
 'I roam'd, and fear'd the smallest star, as tho'  
 'It had an eye that look'd alone for me.  
 'Woods were my habitation; I have lain,  
 'Upon the tall branch swinging, all the day, 365  
 'Mid the thick leaves, and, as the eve drew near,  
 'Crept to the utmost verge to gaze around  
 'For cottage, or the next o'er-shadowing wood  
 'Myself to hide. Long were it now to say  
 'My hourly perils, or how dull to stride 370  
 'Some giant limb, and scarce a living thing,  
 'Through the long hours, behold, save, overhead,  
 'The Squirrel that regardless crack'd his nuts  
 'And dropp'd them on me!'

Cried th' indignant Chief,

- ' Withhold thy babblings! What are these to us?—
- ' Stars! Trees! and Squirrels! Tell us of the King
- ' Who plots our ruin, nor again provoke
- ' IVAR's fierce wrath!'

' Pardon me! cried the Dane;

(Who knew that death was mingled with that frown)

- ' I would forget the rest, and speak alone 380
- ' What thou requirest.—When the night arrived
- ' Descending from my hiding-place, I sought
- ' For cottage, or some solitary Hind,
- ' Whom I might question. Long I sought in vain;
- ' When, I o'ertook a man and bade him tell, 385
- ' Where ALFRED was. He cried, 'I know not Dane!
- ' And if I did, think'st thou, that thou should'st hear?'
- ' I answer'd not, but clave him to the ground.
- ' Then, marching on, I saw a cottager,
- ' And as he cast his eye, by the pale moon, 390
- ' And glimps'd me, fast he sped; I follow'd hard,
- ' When, seeing him upraise his staff, my sword
- ' Gave to the thirsty earth the Saxon's blood.

- ' Now far I roam'd through a vast wood, so vast,
- ' That like the sea, illimitable, round, 395
- ' It seem'd to spread. When, by a clear brook's side,
- ' I saw another cottage. At the door



' I knock'd; none answer'd me; I knock'd again;  
 ' When, wistless who it was, an old man came,  
 ' And ask'd my business. Close behind him stood  
 ' His aged wife: earnest they both look'd up,  
 ' And; undismay'd, inquired again the cause  
 ' That brought me thither. Thus I answer'd them:  
 ' Vain to oppose me! Instant say, old man!  
 ' Where ALFRED is!' This was his answer, ' Friend  
 ' I know not.' ' Nay, but, on thy life, old man!  
 ' Say where thy Monarch! Fail not to declare,  
 ' Or death be thine!' When holding up my sword,  
 ' Stay!' he exclaim'd.. ' I am an aged man,  
 ' And many a long year in this woody vale 410  
 ' Through summer and through winter, I have  
     dwelt,  
 ' But answer me! I cried. Where is thy King?'  
 ' Oh stay thy hand! for by the saints above  
 ' I cannot tell—I never harm have done—  
 ' Spare my grey hairs!'

' Vain is it thus to talk, 415

' I answer'd, and that instant drove my sword,  
 ' Deep in his breast, when loud the woman cried,  
 ' Spare him!' I answer'd not, but with my sword  
 ' For ever closed her eyes. Truly I felt  
 ' At the first view of killing them, a dread— 420

‘ A check within—a slow recoiling of the mind ;  
 ‘ But then the thought, that they were Saxons, rose,  
 ‘ And pity I had none.

‘ Now on I march’d.

‘ Far through the wood I wander’d, and again,  
 ‘ As was my custom, climb’d a lofty tree      425  
 ‘ To meet the day : when, to my wond’ring eyes,  
 ‘ Appear’d a Castle, ’mid the thickest wood,  
 ‘ And near, the Saxon army !—There they are !

‘ Upon the loftiest walls, whilst the morn lagg’d,  
 ‘ I saw a man, so active ’bove his peers,      430  
 ‘ And with command so regal, that I thought,  
 ‘ Nay, I aver, it was the Saxon King,  
 ‘ I still look’d round, and, as the morn advanced,  
 ‘ Beheld the castle clearer ; when I fled,  
 ‘ Seeking thee here. By my good Prince’s grace  
 ‘ True is my story.’

‘ Bravely hast thou said.’

Cried IVAR. ‘ Now the certain day draws near—  
 ‘ The hour of vengeance ! ALFRED, thou art *there* !  
 ‘ But, ere another moon, low in the dust  
 ‘ Thy head shall lie. HUBBA, regard my words !  
 ‘ And GUTHRUM, mark me ! When the hour hath  
     pass’d

- ‘ That bounds our revelry, and the full time
- ‘ Appointed to our Gods—five days from this—
- ‘ Forth will we seek that forest, and consign
- ‘ To black perdition—ALFRED and his host.’ 448

All shouted, ‘ Speed the time !’ and forth withdrew.

END OF BOOK XVI.

## ALFRED. BOOK XVII.

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 ARGUMENT.

*ALFRED on his return to Selwood Forest meets Sigbert; sends him to the Cottage at Ethelney; joins his Troops; marches to fight the Danes; meets the enemy; Oddune dispatched to them with a summons; preparation for battle.*

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'T WAS midnight when the Danish Chieftains rose  
 And left the tent. ALFRED his Harp unstrung,  
 And moved in careless attitude, then stood,  
 Whilst through the darken'd air the big torch flamed,  
 To catch one glance of her—ALSWITHA, now     5  
 Led from the jarring tent. Vain was the hope;  
 He saw her by the Chieftain, GUTHRUM, slow  
 Conducted. On, she silent walk'd. Her eye  
 Dwelt on the ground. The King beheld' her go,  
 Disconsolate, nor moved, 'till every ray,     10  
 That lit her footsteps, vanish'd.

Now he thought

Of perils that his own path throug'd. The wind  
 Howl'd through the air, and every blast that blew  
 Seem'd on his heart to strike, and bleaker make  
 The dreary scene around him. To escape, 15  
 He now resolved, and hastening through the camp  
 Drew near a Centinel.

‘What step is that!’

The warrior cried, and rais'd his lance. The King  
 Heeded him not, but looking at the clouds,  
 Muttering, moved on.

The Centinel exclaim'd, 20

‘By my good spear, the Harper! Wherefore man!  
 ‘Cam'st thou this way, whilst the wind roars so loud,  
 ‘That every living thing, at such an hour,  
 ‘Shelter methinks might seek?’ ALFRED replied;  
 ‘I feed the Porpoise! Hark, her young ones cry!  
 ‘I must away!’ Then swiftly he pass'd on,  
 And, as he pass'd, the Dane, smiting his breast,  
 Cried, ‘Frantic man, safe be thy wand'rings wild!’

When ALFRED through the hostile camp had gone,  
 Tho' joyful, he perceived a secret chill  
 Creep through him, for the stormy night was dark,  
 And where to bend his course, doubtful he stood.  
 Long thus he paus'd. The dew was thick and cold,

And all his perils, 'till this dreary hour,  
 Seem'd hidden from his notice, and they now, 35  
 Came, like a flood, across his feverish mind.  
 Whilst musing thus, slow, from her watery bed,  
 With timid ray, the horned moon uprose,  
 And from her calming influence, seem'd to say  
 To all the elements, ' Like me be still.' 40  
 The King her pale beams joyfully beheld,  
 And sped toward Selwood ; doubting every sound,  
 The foe pursuing, and each branchless tree  
 Some lurking Dane.

Now to the wood he came,  
 When, gazing at his dress, he knew the place 45  
 Where his own garb awaited, and, with speed,  
 Pursued his course to find the Woodman's Cot.  
 Whilst journeying thus, the trees around him seem'd  
 More green, and with their best solicitude,  
 To wave in sounds of kindness—harmony, 50  
 Sweet to the pensive mind—cheering the King.

Now to the door he came, prepared to meet  
 The cheerful woodman and his aged wife.—  
 What cold and creeping dew-damps o'er his skin  
 Burst from each pore, when on the ground he saw  
 The Woodman murder'd ! and his aged Wife  
 Slain by his side ! Then thought he of the Spy

In IVAR's camp, and knew the murderer!  
 Pressing his heart, he cried, ' Dane thou hast slain  
 ' A time-worn and most unoffending pair— 60  
 ' God pardon thee!' Awhile he paus'd; then sought  
 The garments, round th' inhospitable hearth  
 That shew'd no master near. Cold were the stones,  
 The ashes scatter'd, and the half-burnt boughs  
 Resting, and still to rest in quietness, 65  
 Tipp'd with their heads of grey. Nor long he sought;  
 Against the ceiling where the dry herbs hung,  
 Secure he saw them. Looking once again  
 Upon their forms, ' Peace to your injured souls'  
 The King exclaim'd! He would have utter'd more,  
 But sorrow best loves silence. With a sigh,  
 That seem'd to rend his heart, he pass'd the door  
 To seek again his subjects.

On his way,  
 Whilst all was still, he, casting on his eye,  
 Far through the trees, beheld that wretched man—  
 SIGBERT, with solemn step, the woods among  
 Wandering alone. SIGBERT perceiv'd the King,  
 And rush'd to meet him. Fill'd with joy he cried,  
 ' My long-lost Prince! my master! have I found  
 ' Thee, ALFRED! oh my King? Thy fearful frown  
 ' At any other moment I might shun,  
 ' Yet now I heed it not, to see again

‘ My long-lost Lord.’

ALFRED remember’d well  
 His former anger, but, the sudden joy,  
 From certainty that he was yet a King, 85  
 So fill’d his mind, that he forgot the past,  
 And, wistless what he said, cried, ‘ Peace be thine!’  
 SIGBERT then spake: ‘ My master, pardon me!  
 ‘ And with my weakness bear, a little space,  
 ‘ That I may tell my grief. To name the pain 90  
 ‘ This breast hath felt, since thou didst bid me go  
 ‘ An outcast and a murd’rer; I would fain,  
 ‘ But cannot. Oh my King, this heart is sad!  
 ‘ I, from a guilty conscience have endured  
 ‘ Anguish so terrible and past the power 95  
 ‘ Of words to tell, that how a heart should bear  
 ‘ A load so vast, I knew not till this hour.  
 ‘ Pardon me, Monarch!

Thus the King replied:  
 ‘ SIGBERT, remember, I am Man, not God!  
 ‘ He must the deed forgive!’

When SIGBERT thus:  
 ‘ Most truly! and, by wrestling fervently,  
 ‘ His ear hath heard my prayer; and I have faith  
 ‘ That pardon’d in th’ Almighty’s eye I stand.—



Do thou forgive me !'

ALFRED cried, ' I do !

' I chid thee, but to teach how harder far      105  
' To bear Heaven's chiding. Now thy mind is chang'd,  
' And thou dost see how mutable the man  
' Who on himself doth rest, when the hour comes  
' Of sore temptation—I am yet thy friend.'

The drowning man, who spies approaching aid,  
Feels not such joy as SIGBERT. Thus he cried :  
' Monarch, my heart is thine ! but to my words  
' Thou must not look for recompence. Declare,  
' Oh King ! how I may shew my gratitude,  
' And if I do not shew it, trust not man !—      115  
' His vow is vain.'

ALFRED replied : ' My time

' Important duties claim, but I will stay,  
' Albeit unwise, one moment to bestow  
' A passing word, with meek austerity.

' Ask of the world's great author, to subdue      120  
' All evil in thy heart, but, chiefly, wrath—  
' The source of ills unnumber'd, which, around,  
' Spreads direful burdens—making hell of earth,  
' And fiends of men. SIGBERT ! 'tis well to know,

' This shadowy world, this transient state of being,  
 ' But ill deserves of man, the sacrifice  
 ' Anger requires. What is there here on earth  
 ' To rouse our spirits? what below the sky  
 ' Worthy a creature's wrath? Few are our days,  
 ' And all our little evils, sent to cleanse 130  
 ' Our wayward minds and faculties, from dross,  
 ' Debasing, and unworthy that high name—  
 ' The sons of God. Precious to Heaven, is he  
 ' Who sees in mortal things, their real worth,  
 ' And looks beyond them! Here on earth we sow,  
 ' After, we reap the fruit. The race is here,  
 ' The prize hereafter. Here the ocean raves,  
 ' There is our haven. And that man shall find,  
 ' Who through this howling wilderness preserves  
 ' Spotless his mind, and in a tainted world 140  
 ' Holds converse with his Maker; sees how great  
 ' The worth of holiness, and truly knows  
 ' How to respect himself, and to preserve  
 ' God's Temple pure;—that man shall surely find  
 ' Life's evils fleeting, and his mind prepared 145  
 ' For that fruition, full, unspeakable,  
 ' God hath reserved above.

' Be these thy thoughts,  
 ' Oh SIGBERT! and when wrath o'ertakes thee,  
 wrongs,

- ‘ Stop thee to hear their tale; gird up thy mind,
- ‘ And, like a traveller whose home is Heaven, 150
- ‘ Small things endure unruffled. Thou hast slain
- ‘ A pleading man! I would forget the deed
- ‘ For, in thy countenance, methinks I see,
- ‘ Contrition; that—to God! and for thy kind
- ‘ And many services, I hold thee dear.’ 155

SIGBERT essay'd to speak.—ALFRED again:

- ‘ As once I told thee, now I tell the same—
- ‘ Thou shalt not war! Profession thou hast made
- ‘ Of holiness and of devoted heart
- ‘ To holy ways—flee then th' avenging sword! 160
- ‘ If wars must come—if human blood must flow—
- ‘ Let those who never bore the teacher's name
- ‘ Stand forth and combat! but the God we serve,
- ‘ In most peculiar way, his Ministers
- ‘ Requires to dwell in peace.'

SIGBERT replied; 165

- ‘ As the tall tree, catches the sun's last beam,
- ‘ When all beside is darkness, so may I,
- ‘ When death draws near, oh King, remember thee,
- ‘ And these thy words! My heart indeed is fill'd
- ‘ With lasting gratitude. Thy mild rebuke, 170
- ‘ On this my mind flashes conviction's light,
- ‘ And for thy precepts, I am nearer Heaven.

' I see my frailty, I perceive how wrath,  
 ' And most full hatred, to the instruments  
 ' God hath seen fit to use, hath fill'd my mind. 175  
 ' Th' Almighty Father asks but penitence  
 ' From us his children, and for these my crimes,  
 ' *That* would I feel—I am an alter'd man.  
 ' Point but the path thy servant should pursue,  
 ' And he will seek it from this hour, and strive 180  
 ' To merit thine applause—to copy thee.'

ALFRED replied, ' This, SIGBERT! would I say;  
 ' Fly thou to Ethelney—that humble cot  
 ' Where late thou saw'st me; there abides my son.  
 ' Whom thou discover'd'st on the bleak down wide,  
 ' And thither broughtest. There direct thy course,  
 ' And guard him with such constancy of care  
 ' As I would fain bestow. One moment more,  
 ' I must address thee. Now are these my steps  
 ' Verging toward that decisive hour, when sword  
 ' Must clash with sword, and every Saxon strive  
 ' For life and liberty, with each delight  
 ' Man values. Doubtful the event! Thy King  
 ' May not survive it! I have one request—  
 ' SIGBERT, preserve my child! If I should fall,  
 ' Keep him secure! and if in after times,  
 ' Saxons should think of me, and Heav'n have crown'd  
 ' Their brave endeavours; lead him to their camp!

- ' Say to th' assembled armies, View the Child  
 ' Whose sire was ALFRED! Own him as your Prince!  
 ' A better fortune shall support his arms,  
 ' And he shall do what ALFRED would have done!  
 Cried SIGBERT, ' Oh my King! thou must not die.  
 ' I had almost with impious zeal declared  
 ' Thou shalt not die! Thou art our earthly trust!—  
 ' Might I unblamed disturb the sanctity  
 ' Of thy repose, and ask one question more?—  
 ' Where is our blessed Queen?' At SIGBERT's  
 words,

ALFRED his forehead clasp'd, a sudden chill  
 Rush'd through his frame, when, feebly he replied,  
 ' Name it no more! I must not answer thee!  
 ' Angels of God, defend her! me preserve,  
 ' Father Almighty!

' SIGBERT! I am now  
 ' Bound to the castle, and these moments few  
 ' Ill can I spare. Depart thou on thy way!' 215  
 When SIGBERT cried, ' Farewell!' and both retired.

As through the intertwined and darken'd path  
 ALFRED proceeded, mid' a thicket near  
 He spied a Wolf! His eyes were visible  
 While yet his form was hid;—glaring with wrath!  
 And as the King uprais'd his sword, the beast

Disclosed his fang, and with a horrid snarl  
 Darted to meet his prey. The Monarch stood  
 Unmoved ! The wolf look'd up, yet, fear'd to leap !  
 Foam issued from his jaw ! a stream of light    225  
 From either orb appear'd, and every hair,  
 Bristling, declarèd his fury. Brief the pause !  
 He springs voracious. ALFRED stretch'd his arm,  
 And, with a sudden aim, seized his huge throat,  
 And whilst the monster coil'd, gasping for breath,  
 Deep in his heart, plunged his impetuous sword.

To Selwood's Forest, (while the monarch sought  
 The Danish Camp) full many a gallant Chief  
 And gallant Band—Wessex' indignant Sons !  
 Sped resolute, with arms invincible—                    235  
 Their own true courage ! panting to survey  
 Once more the Foe, that breath'd in British air.

Now to the castle walls the King drew near.  
 The Saxons view, and rush to meet their Prince;  
 Wild with excess of joy ! When ALFRED thus :—  
 (Pleased to behold so brave a Company.)

' ODDUNE, and ye my stedfast friends, I read  
 ' In every countenance, the unfeign'd joy  
 ' My presence gives you—Viewing, as I do,  
 ' Ye, Patriot Hosts ! Ye, Britons, crowding round

‘ Your Country’s banner and the Prince, who lives  
 ‘ To do you good, my heart intenser love  
 ‘ Feels for you, than it ever yet hath felt.  
 ‘ You are my Children ! I, your Father am !  
 ‘ Important are the scenes by me beheld, 250  
 ‘ Since last we met. I, ’mid the Danish camp,  
 ‘ Have wander’d unmolested, on my back  
 ‘ A Harp I bore ; I have survey’d their force  
 ‘ Obtain’d their plans, and now again am here  
 ‘ To tell you my designs. The hour is come ! 255  
 ‘ Prepare for battle ! In the Danish Camp,  
 ‘ I stood and heard a spy inform his chief,  
 ‘ He knew our haunts ! He knew the very spot,  
 ‘ Selwood he named, where all our forces lay,  
 ‘ With me, your Monarch. In their savage rites  
 ‘ Five days they vow’d to spend. If we advance  
 ‘ Fast to the combat, these our swords may bear  
 ‘ Destruction unawares, and from our might.  
 ‘ Each Dane lie low. No season this for words !  
 ‘ Upon the coming morn, Saxons must march, 265  
 ‘ And now the preparation ! Yet brave men !  
 ‘ First hear your Monarch, for a thought hath risen  
 ‘ Of no mean import.

‘ At this solemn hour,  
 ‘ When all we have hangs on the quivering beam !—  
 ‘ When Denmark’s Demons hover round, and Time

' Half rears his hand, to write the Record dread—  
 ' Saxons are vanquished ! Britain is no more !'  
 ' Where now is Mercia ? Where Northumbria's hosts ?  
 ' How should we feel if trusting in their aid ?  
 ' They promised us, with all their wonted fire 275  
 ' Of base hypocrisy, to swell our ranks  
 ' With countless heroes : where do they appear ?  
 ' I see them not ! yet, Oh transporting view !  
 ' I see a nobler sight ! I see my friends !  
 ' Wessex' brave Sons, my subjects, now resolved  
 ' To vindicate their rights—to meet the Foe—  
 ' And yet, undaunted, strive for victory !  
 ' Yes, Noble Soldiers ! now do I behold  
 ' The English Lion roused, shaking his mane  
 ' In fierce defiance ! Let the Traitors fly ! 285  
 ' We need them not ! We fear no giant Foes—  
 ' Pigmies to courage ! In our native strength,  
 ' We, like a Forest to the howling blast,  
 ' Will laugh at their assaults ! and whilst we march,  
 ' To give or to receive the final blow— 290  
 ' Our trust, our song shall be—' God ! and our  
     ' right !'  
 ' Prepare for life or death ! Or the next morn,  
 ' Wessex, alone, shall face the haughty Dane !'  
 Amid th' exultant shout, each big heart throb'd,  
 To meet the ruffian race that scourged the Isle,  
 And told the lingering moments as they pass'd,



When in the west, with gorgeous clouds array'd  
 The Orb of day, majestic, slow retired,  
 While mists, and faint blue clouds, still darkening,  
 throng'd

The Firmament of Heaven, his lonely couch, 300  
 ALFRED, tho' sleepless, sought. His anxious mind  
 Pored on the future, and, tho' he disdain'd  
 Th' intruder fear, yet, many a changeful scene,  
 Before him slowly pass'd, some bright and fair;  
 Some clothed in shadows; some immersed in night;  
 Tempests and whirlwinds, ruin, blast, and death.  
 The midnight lamp, slept in the stagnant air.

A general absence of all sounds prevail'd—

A silence that alarm'd; which, sudden, bound  
 The free-born Spirit in mysterious chains 310  
 That sank it to the earth, and made all thoughts  
 Ponderous and passive. From material scenes,  
 With traces imperceptible, the King  
 Now yielded up his mind to Fancy gay,  
 That danced, fantastic, o'er all times all forms 315  
 Which in succession rose, brief as the beam  
 That glimmers on the fountain. Lo! He starts!  
 Reality, in stern attire, drew near.

With eye-ball fix'd in vacancy, once more,  
 He feels the burden of uncertainty, 320  
 'Till, with the good-man's confidence, he cried,  
 With such a smile as guilt ne'er visited,

' Ye shadows of the night that haunt my soul !  
 ' Tho' dress'd in awe, ye yet may be endured—  
 ' Mine is the peaceful conscience ! Still, he reigns—  
 ' The Lord Omnipotent ! 'in whom I trust.'  
 He said, when, gently, Sleep, his eye-lids closed  
 And pleasant were the visions of the night.

Ere the first blush of dawn, the King arose,  
 When, wondering, he beheld his gallant troops.  
 Marshall'd in due array. ' At such a time  
 ' I would not be the latest,' he exclaim'd ;—  
 ' Great is your zeal.' He further strove to speak,  
 But 'mid the shouts, no more his voice was heard,  
 Than is the pine's upon the mountain top,      335  
 When with the blast it swings, to some remote  
 And gazing traveller. The tumult ceas'd,  
 When the King cried :

' Brave subjects, now advance !  
 ' The strife is near ! We haste to meet the foe !  
 ' Deeds, and not words become this solemn hour.'  
 Their swords they drew, ne'er to be sheath'd again,  
 'Till one was sunk in death, Saxon or Dane !

After long toil, with looks of secret joy,  
 Or, bitter, like the hypocrite's in sleep,  
 As hopes or doubts prevail'd ; they mount a hill,

When every Saxon stopp'd, sudden, like one  
 Who meets a precipice, for through the vale,  
 Before them, march'd the Danes! And they too  
       stopp'd,  
 Half terrified at this unlook'd-for sight,  
 Saxons in arms!

                  Instant the Danes drew back, 350  
 (To a near hill, where a proud castle rose)  
 As tho' they fear'd the fight. The subterfuge  
 ALFRED beheld, and check'd his troops, who sought,  
 Boldly to follow.

                  Soon they reach'd the hill—  
 The Danes, and both th' opposing armies stood 355  
 Wafting the mutual curse. Like two huge mounts,  
 Neighbouring, around whose heads, the white mists  
       sail,  
 And ever when th' aerial currents change,  
 From each to each, mov'd by fierce jealousy,  
 Their cloud artillery send. ALFRED thus spake,  
 ' Subjects, behold the Danes! view yonder host,  
 ' And in them see the spoilers of your homes,  
 ' The murd'ers of your children and your sires,  
 ' The foes of earth, the reprobate of God—  
 ' Now are your hearts your own?' All clash'd their  
       shields. 365

' I will not bid my subjects bleed,' he cried,  
 ' But of necessity. ODDUNE, approach !'  
 The Chief drew near. Him ALFRED thus address'd :  
 ' To me it seems expedient to dismiss  
 ' Some messenger, of bold and manly port, 370  
 ' To yonder Danes, bidding them leave this land.'  
 ODDUNE replied, ' Let me that herald be !'  
 ' Go,' said the King, ' thus to the Danes declare :

' Ye wasting men ! ye murd'ers, flee away !  
 ' Swift as the eagle, flee ! or, by the sword, 375  
 ' Soon shall ye fall, all fall, to teach mankind  
 ' Heaven's recompence. Say, wherefore come you  
     here,  
 ' To scourge this land, to waste this happy isle,  
 ' To wrong this people ? whom your swords may slay  
 ' But ne'er shall conquer, while yon sun remains,  
 ' Or earth endures. ALFRED our King hat sent  
 ' Me to forewarn you. Instant on the ground  
 ' Cast ye your arms, and swear by all the gods  
 ' You worship, forth to leave this land, nor more  
 ' Drench it with blood : so shall our King provide  
 ' Fit vessels, you to carry to your homes  
 ' Or where you ask it. Tell them I am one,  
 ' Who loves not strife, who never smote a foe  
 ' But with regret, pungent and keen, and now  
 ' Seek their departure, rather than their lives : 390

' But if they scorn thee, tell them by the hand  
 ' That wields the thunder, by the power that stills  
 ' The Ocean when he raveth, I will meet  
 ' Their forces in yon spacious plain, and prove  
 ' What Saxons can perform, when in their might  
 ' They strive for liberty.'

ODDUNE replied,

' Great is my gratitude for this new proof  
 ' Of confidence; and may I catch thy fire  
 ' And Danes impress, as thou impressest me.  
 ' Now, 'till the hour of midnight, fare thee well!'

Down the steep hill he strode, and through the vale,  
 And soon, the foe approach'd. A band drew near  
 And cried, 'Thy business? stranger!' ODDUNE spake,  
 ' Where is your Chief? Lead me to him! I bring  
 ' Words of high import.'

To the tent they then 105  
 Conducted ODDUNE, where in bitter talk  
 And loud upbraidings, all the Danish chiefs  
 Sat in close commune.

' Ah! a Saxon here!'

Cried IVAR as he enter'd. ' Dost thou bring  
 ' Vows of thy Monarch's fealty, or some bribe 110

E

' To stay our wrath ? ' ' Neither ! ' the Chief replied.  
 ' Neither ! ' said IVAR. ' By thy stately port  
 ' Thou seem'st like one, who never yet has felt  
 ' The Danish sword, how heavy, when it falls,  
 ' By Danish arm impell'd. Thy business ? Say ! 115  
 ' I wait to hear thee ! If thou stop to gaze  
 ' A second time around, this sturdy lance  
 ' Shall pierce thy heart.'

ODDUNE untterrified

Thus answer'd, ' Chieftain ! if thou seek by frowns  
 ' To check my purpose, resolute, oh Dane, 120  
 ' Thou know'st me not ! Mine is no coward's breast !  
 ' I bear a message from our gallant King,—  
 ' ALFRED, his words are these.'

HUBBA upraised

His ponderous spear, and had not GUTHRUM seized  
 And stay'd his purpose, prostrate on the ground 125  
 ODDUNE had lain. Him IVAR thus rebuked ;  
 ' Thine anger check, good HUBBA ! let us know  
 ' This Saxon's words, and, tho' we after slay,  
 ' First hear the message.'

HUBBA thus replied :

' Now will I hear thee, cool ; Saxon, proceed !'  
 ' ODDUNE prepar'd to speak, when IVAR cried,

- ‘ Gaze not thus haughty! If thy message, man!  
 ‘ Be bold, as these thy looks, death shall hide both!’

‘ Talk to the hind of fear, I know it not!’

ODDUNE replied. ‘ These are the words I bear:—

- ‘ Ye wasting men! ye murd’ers, flee away!  
 ‘ Swift as the eagle, flee! or, by our sword,  
 ‘ Soon shall you fall, all fall, to teach mankind,  
 ‘ Heaven’s recompence.’—

GUTHRUM arose and cried,

- ‘ Let me this hero answer! By thy words 140  
 ‘ And looks so terrible, a stranger’s heart  
 ‘ Might think thee some unconquer’d warrior bold,  
 ‘ From colder climes, but we, the Saxon might  
 ‘ Too well can estimate, vain man! to fear  
 ‘ Thee or thy Monarch. ALFRED bids us flee! 145  
 ‘ Sweet words to lull old-aged credulity!  
 ‘ Or, by the sword, soon shall we fall! all fall!  
 ‘ This is so wonderful, that, to my mind,  
 ‘ It is as tho’ some running Brook, with words,  
 ‘ Blustering and loud, should threaten with his waves  
 ‘ To inundate old Ocean. What the next  
 ‘ Said thy good king?’

ODDUNE thus answer’d him;

- ‘ He bade me say, wherefore approach you here

' To scourge this land—to waste this happy isle—  
 ' To wrong this people? whom your swords may slay  
 ' But ne'er shall conquer, whilst yon sun remains,  
 ' Or earth endures. ALFRED our King hath sent  
 ' Me to forewarn you. Instant on the ground  
 ' Cast you your arms, and swear by all the gods  
 ' You worship, forth to leave this land, nor more  
 ' Drench it with blood, so shall our King provide  
 ' Fit vessels you to carry to your homes,  
 ' Or where you ask it.'

GUTHRUM cried, ' Most kind!  
 ' But shall the ships be strong and large? My words  
 ' Scarce can be serious! Did thy Monarch think  
 ' Danes, like the Assi,\* tremble at the beams  
 ' Spiders in sun-shine hurl? Lay down our arms!  
 ' What said he more?'—

ODDUNE indignant cried;  
 ' This, said our Monarch. Tell them I am one  
 ' Who loves not strife, who never smote a foe 170  
 ' But with regret, pungent and keen, and now  
 ' Seek their departure rather than their lives.'

\* The people of the south, who were believed to be all  
 towards, and for whom the Danes entertained the greatest  
 contempt.



Said GUTHRUM, 'Kind! He pleadeth well the  
' cause

' Of one who fears the future!' IVAR rose  
And thus to ODDUNE spake.

' Presumptuous man!

' IVAR disdains to jeer thee! I will now  
' Talk to thee serious. Has thy King ne'er heard  
' The laws we honour, and the gods we serve;  
' That he should thus upbraid the true-born Dane  
' With loving blood too fondly? Dost thou know  
' What ODIN to the faithful warrior speaks  
' In dreams and darkness—in the stormy hour  
' When the winds roar, and ocean lifts his head,  
' Staying the winds that lash him? 'Take thy sword,  
' Go forth and war! fear but the coward's name,  
' And tho' in many a prostrate victim's heart  
' Thy sword be bathed, go on to devastate!  
' Scorn mercy! hear the pleader's voice in vain!  
' And ever when thy heart, shrinks on itself  
' And pity whispers—think thou of the joys 190  
' Valhalla boasts, where never mortal came  
' Who waded not through blood, who never met  
' The foe in battle and inured his soul  
' To deathful enterprize?' What halls hast thou?  
' What object so commanding? motive, what, 195  
' To spur thee on to action? or delights

- Compared to those we hope for, when, 'mid gods
- We join the valiant, and from hostile skulls,
- With songs and dancings, quaff th' immortal mead?
- These are our hopes, oh Saxon! these the views.
- That urge us on to glory. Now declare
- What more thy Monarch said! for I would hear,
- Albeit it make me smile and frown, like one,
- Who sees his Sire, toiling amid the waves,
- Now mounting high, now buried from his sight.'

ODDUNE replied, ' These were my Monarch's  
' words :

- If they disdain thee, tell them, by the hand
- That wields the thunder; by the power that stills
- The Ocean when he raveth, I will meet
- Their forces in yon spacious plain, and prove 210
- What Saxons can perform, when in their might
- They strive for liberty. The God we serve
- He is Omnipotent.' IVAR exclaim'd;
- Destruction seize thee, man! who stills the sea?
- Who wields the thunder? who, but him we serve?
- The god of battle! Is he not our friend?
- Hath he not follow'd us from land to land,
- From sea to sea, rousing to strifes and wars;
- And granting, e'en in death, to every Dane
- The eye that speaks of ecstasy, the heart 220
- That leaps with rapture? —

When with fiercer wrath

HUBBA uprose. ' Tell thy devoted King—  
 ' Of every Saxon, not a man shall live,  
 ' By the next eve, to gaze upon the sun  
 ' And think how sweet his beams, when the rough air  
 ' Blows chill.'

GUTHRUM replied: ' Forgive these words !

' Say not, they all shall perish, but, each man  
 ' Who owns not us the conquerors of this isle  
 ' And swears allegiance.' IVAR cried, ' Away !  
 ' Thy senseless words, GUTHRUM ! confuse mine ear !  
 ' Speak not, but to inform yon daring man  
 ' He soon shall perish, like that gallant youth,  
 ' TULBA, my brother, who from death sends forth  
 ' Th' accusing groan, whilst loud our father calls  
 ' For sweeping vengeance. Tho' thy King ap-  
     ' proach'd, 235  
 ' And all his army, bending to the earth  
 ' With vows and oaths to call us their liege lords,  
 ' Yet would I scorn them, for, by THOR I swear,  
 ' They all shall perish !'

HUBBA cried: ' All ! all !

' Spare not a soul !' To ODDUNE thus he spake:  
 ' For this imperious summons, and thy threats,  
 ' Proud Saxon ! thou art doom'd to share the choice,

- ‘ Valkyries shall teach thee ! Thou shalt live to  
mourn
- ‘ But not survive our anger. Thou art now
- ‘ Dead ! for I view thee on the green sward stretch’d !
- ‘ Prophetic visions dance before mine eye ! I see
- ‘ Thy faithless arm, beside thee ! round are strew’d
- ‘ Saxons unnumber’d, who like thee provoked
- ‘ Our wrath and perish’d. Instant, flee away !
- ‘ With second breath pollute not thou the air ! 250
- ‘ Or, know the consequence !’

He rais’d his spear

When ODDUNE cried, ‘ Withhold ! If die I must  
 ‘ Let me this hour enjoy. Hear me, oh Danes !  
 ‘ One word, and I depart.

- ‘ This isle is ours
- ‘ By long inheritance ! We never roam 255
- ‘ From shore to shore, from distant clime to clime,
- ‘ To rob our fellows—Have we warr’d with you ?
- ‘ Have we alarm’d your coasts ? disturbed your homes ?
- ‘ Destroy’d your people ? never, as ye know !
- ‘ Scourgers of this our isle, I bid you heed ! 260
- ‘ Our voice is peace, but if you pant for war—
- ‘ Unshaken, greedy of all violence—
- ‘ Britons shall meet you ! Vengeance shall arise,
- ‘ Dress’d in new terrors ! seize her flaming brand,

' And join the fury of this fight, with eyes      265  
 ' More fearful bright, than man hath yet beheld,  
 ' Or Frenzy started at, gazing at Heaven.  
 ' Prepare for combat ! On the coming morn,  
 ' Our swords shall meet you ! God, the living God !  
 ' Saxons confide in ! Now I leave your tent.' 270

IVAR exclaim'd, ' Not so ! First hear a Dane ;  
 ' What is thy God to ours, that thou should'st boast  
 ' Thus of his might ? as tho' th' immortal God—  
 ' ODIN, the world's great father, form'd not him,  
 ' And thee, and us. Didst thou, bold man ! inquire  
 ' The Danish injury ? the powerful cause  
 ' That urged us hither—bade us cross the seas ?  
 ' Ask gasping REGNER ! ask our murder'd sire !  
 ' Ask the deep curses, and the fiery wrath  
 ' He breath'd at death, when to his country's gods  
 ' He look'd and cried, ' To join your laughing halls,  
 ' Come I, blest spirits ! Yet on Saxon land,  
 ' Let plagues alight, and slaughter glut himself  
 ' With death and carnage ; now thine own heart ask,  
 ' What REGNER's sons might merit, if they fail'd  
 ' To waste this isle, and with their valiant arms  
 ' Send to deep hell, thee and thy hated race ?—  
 ' Dear is revenge !'

Like one o'er embers bent,

Pond'ring on black designs, when, lo ! the fire  
 That seem'd extinguish'd, gives a sudden blaze,  
 And shows the face, the wrinkled brow, the eye  
 That pored on vengeance and all deadly plans,  
 Conceal'd before,—So HUBBA's face appear'd  
 With such possession of all hellish rage  
 When IVAR named his father. Thus he cried : 295

‘ By all the Gods whose battles we have fought !  
 ‘ By all the hopes that cheer us ! by the blood  
 ‘ Our father curs'd this isle with, when he groan'd  
 ‘ In Ella's dungeon—not one soul shall live  
 ‘ O'er the next day ? Hundreds my sword will take  
 ‘ To stay its appetite ! Its light shall gleam  
 ‘ New terrors on the dying ! Hungry wolves  
 ‘ Shall hover round ? The eagle from on high  
 ‘ Mark his near banquet, and with joyous scream  
 ‘ Stun death with horrors. To thy King at hand  
 ‘ These tidings bear ! and let him for the fight  
 ‘ Hold his heart ready ! for the coming morn,  
 ‘ When through the clouds the whizzing darts shall  
   ‘ fly—  
 ‘ The bucklers thunder, and th' injured Danes  
 ‘ Shout 'mid the storm of vengeance ! Now, depart !  
 ‘ Thy end is near !’

ODDUNE forbore to speak.

Self-confident, he left the Danes, and walk'd  
 Slow through the hostile ranks, and down the hill  
 And through the vale, and to the lofty spot  
 Where ALFRED and his army pitch'd their tents.

The King beheld him coming, and advanced,  
 With mind presageful of no tidings good.  
 'What are thy words?' he said. 'Uncertainty  
 'Probes most my spirit.'

ODDUNE cried, 'Oh King!  
 'The Danes are hostile! On the approaching morn,  
 'Britons must dare the fight!' ALFRED exclaim'd:  
 'Tho' seek I peace, yet fear I not to war!  
 'Prepare for battle!'

ODDUNE and each Chief,  
 Heard, and to rouse the Saxon hosts retired.

## ALFRED. BOOK XVIII.

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 ARGUMENT.

*THE Saxons descend into the plain to meet the Danes.  
Dissentions in the Danish Camp. The Battle of  
Eddington.*

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O'ER all the Saxon Camp, no man forgot  
The business of the morrow. Through the night  
Sleep never sooth'd them, and ideal forms  
And images, all ghastly, wounds and strifes—  
The sounding helmet and the clashing shield 5  
So deeply fill'd their minds, that real things  
Seem'd shadows, shadows real things. At length  
The light of morn appear'd, and the sun rose  
Slow on his journey, shrouded with thick clouds,  
As tho' he knew the hour, and strove to stay 10  
Th' impending deeds of Death. When ALFRED, thus,  
Addressed the brave and circling multitude.

‘ On yonder hill, behold that enemy  
‘ Whose wasting swords have left you now to boast  
‘ Naught but your courage ; that alone remains—



' The fix'd, imperishable gift of Heaven!  
 ' Base is the heart that in a common cause  
 ' Raises this weapon! but, to save our lives,  
 ' To guard from ruin all that man holds dear,  
 ' Sanctions the deed! Who, 'mid this list'ning throng,  
 ' That mourns not, by yon wasters, home destroy'd,  
 ' Friends massacred, or wife or children slain?  
 ' Long have the louring clouds our prospect dimm'd,  
 ' And Heaven seem'd adverse; doubtless to correct  
 ' Some public vice, some confidence, in aught 25  
 ' Save Him who made us; but, the mists retire!  
 ' The dawn of hope is come! the sun is risen!  
 ' And we are now to combat. Yonder host  
 ' Have dared the Lord Almighty! Yonder host  
 ' Our God have dared defy, and now, His arm 30  
 ' Shall rise to vengeance. In the Lord of Hosts  
 ' We trust—our fathers' God; and in the hour,  
 ' Fast coming, He will be our friend. Arise!  
 ' Go forth to conquer! for this day shall Heaven  
 ' Fight on our sides.

' Think, brave and gallant men! 35  
 ' What cause is yours. You, for your freedom, rights,  
 ' Your native homes, your faithful friends, the race  
 ' Who call you father, and the wife beloved,  
 ' Now lift the spear, and brandish pitiless  
 Each slaughter-weapon. What, in life, can man

' Seek, after slav'ry? What can charm the heart  
 ' Of prostrate slave? Yet e'en this wretched state  
 ' You are denied, for yonder Danes have sworn,  
 ' Full confident of victory, to spare,  
 ' When this day's strife is o'er, not one who lives,  
 ' Subject or Monarch.—

' Saxons! do I now  
 ' Declare of dangers you yourselves may feel  
 ' To fire your spirits? Well I know your hearts  
 ' Far nobler, than, at time like this, to pore  
 ' O'er selfish ills; you cast your ardent eyes 50  
 ' To days far distant! You with bitterness  
 ' Think of your future race, your sons unborn,  
 ' The generations, who, if we succeed  
 ' Against this raging foe, from us shall date  
 ' Their every blessing, and in after times, 55  
 ' When you are low and silent, look to Heaven,  
 ' And pray, its fairest garlands you may bind,  
 ' Its highest seats reward you. They shall sit,  
 ' Beneath the fig-tree and the clustering vine,  
 ' Contented, and look back, on you, brave men! 60  
 ' Who fought, perchance who bled, to buy for them  
 ' Each joy they know.—

' Start not at naming death,  
 ' For death will come, and many a man who now

- ' Stands round me, soon must prove—a breathless  
 corse !  
 ' Myself may fall ! The tongue that speaks, this heart  
 ' That throbs for action, soon upon the ground,  
 ' Exposed, and still may lie. Sigh not at this,  
 ' But rather let our hearts—both yours and mine,  
 ' Exultant leap, and thank the God of Heaven,  
 ' That in his sight deserving we appear 70  
 ' To fight our country's battles and receive  
 ' The tear of gratitude from those behind.  
 ' Smile then at death ! fear only to depart,  
 ' Unconscious of performing as you ought  
 ' Your trying duties : having done, let pain, 75  
 ' Let anguish seize us—let soul-harrowing pangs  
 ' Rage their brief moment, the tempestuous scene  
 ' Will soon be o'er, and then awaits us all  
 ' Pleasure on earth, or blessedness in heaven.  
 ' Now, down the hill, advance to meet the foe !' 80

As the King ended, one wide murmur rose,  
 Of admiration and heart-speaking praise :  
 When, to the vale beneath, dauntless they sped.

Still, on the hill above, the black flag waved ;  
 Nor Dane appear'd ! ' Now, Saxons !' ALFRED cried,  
 ' The hour is come ! The big, th' important hour !  
 ' Why lags the foe ?'

Within the Danish camp  
 Loud tumults rose. IVAR's fierce eye beheld  
 The Saxon army, and with wrath exclaim'd,  
 ' HUBBA, away! Thy counsels I disdain! 90  
 ' Thou hast deceived me! Where was yonder host,  
 ' When in thy pride thou vaunted'st, and didst say  
 ' This isle our own—thy sword victorious  
 ' O'er ALFRED and all Britons? Where were then  
 ' Yon marshall'd ranks, who now present themselves,  
 ' Clad in their war array, and shout aloud  
 ' Frantic defiance? Where was ALFRED then?—  
 ' A wand'rer, as thou told'st me, in the woods  
 ' And caves and mountains; now, too late, perceived,  
 ' Hatching revenge, and brooding o'er the means 100  
 ' To stem our power! How hast thou spent thy time?  
 ' Where slept thy valour, whilst the Saxon King,  
 ' In secret plann'd his vengeance?'

### Like the Bull

Goaded to madness, yet with bars confin'd,  
 HUBBA appear'd, 'till IVAR ceas'd; he then 105  
 Cried vaunting:

' To thy native shores, again!  
 ' I heed thee not! I need not thy support?  
 ' Vain mortal, fly! and GUTHRUM, let him fly!  
 ' Fly all! myself shall meet the Saxons! this—

' This arm shall meet them, and the gods record  
 ' HUBBA's proud conquest! I such force will shew  
 ' As when the Ocean lays his monstrous hand  
 ' On some great continent—Or Winter's King—  
 ' Dark Frost, upon the whirlwind when he rides  
 ' Triumphant, and with potent word, arrests, 115  
 ' When in 'mid course, plunging o'er hideous rocks,  
 ' The thund'ring cataract. What are my deeds,  
 ' Ask'st thou? oh IVAR! Let the Cambrian shore  
 ' Answer thy question! Let the wasted towns,  
 ' Britain beholds, her villages destroy'd,  
 Her cots consum'd, her sons and daughters slain: 120  
 ' These are the deeds of HUBBA, ere thou cam'st  
 ' A tame spectator to look on, and now,  
 ' Danger awaits thee, shrinkest at thy heart;—  
 ' Unworthy of thy father and thy race.'

IVAR indignant cried, ' Spirit abhorr'd! 125  
 ' Take back thy rage! reserve it to withstand  
 ' The Adder's venom, checking kind with kind.  
 ' Scourge of my fortunes! Have I not the right—  
 ' The leader of the Danes, the elder far,  
 ' To ask thy ways, and, if I deem it well, 130  
 ' Check thee for evils, such as I perceive  
 ' Thy inexperienced rashness hath brought down?  
 ' I know I have! And if thou question it—

‘ This sword shall tell thine error !’

‘ Death be thine !’

Cried HUBBA; and, his sword upraising, aim’d 135  
 The fatal blow, that on the Chieftain’s shield  
 Woke thunders, and as IVAR raised his sword,  
 That never fell but death attended it,  
 GUTHRUM his huge arm seized and cried, ‘ Forbear !  
 ‘ Chieftains, forbear ! My head with mists doth swim !  
 ‘ Is this your vaunted zeal ? Danes, stay your wrath !  
 ‘ Mark yonder Saxons ! see their shining ranks !  
 ‘ Hear their loud shouts ! their mad defiance, hear !  
 ‘ And from destruction save the Danish host !’

IVAR and HUBBA paused. Both sheath’d their  
 swords. 145

When IVAR thus exclaim’d to GUTHRUM near :  
 ‘ Chieftain, depart ! prepare the ranks, and swift  
 ‘ If thou behold the Saxons, from yon hill  
 ‘ Descending to the plain, waiting the strife,  
 ‘ Approach and warn us !’ GUTHRUM left the tent,  
 When IVAR to his brother thus again.

‘ HUBBA, thy words have wrong’d me ! thou hast  
 wrong’d

‘ Each honest Dane. Thy thoughtless confidence,  
 ‘ Hath sprung a trap so fatal, that, to burst

- ‘ Its fangs of iron, well might puzzle now 155
- ‘ VAFTHRUDINIS self.\* For this I Britain left!
- ‘ For this I sought my native land, and roused
- ‘ Each Dane to follow me, breathing revenge!
- ‘ Called up each dormant passion, made them feel
- ‘ Unquenchable desires, to spoil the race 160
- ‘ That slew our father—now at length to see
- ‘ The Saxon King, whom we so oft have driven
- ‘ Before our might, unconquer’d, and about
- ‘ With yon innumerable host, to strive
- ‘ With Danish valour. Not that I perceive 165
- ‘ Fear at my heart; this breast must know from thee
- ‘ What fear means, if it sought to learn, for Gods
- ‘ Fear not the Giants less than I the foe.†
- ‘ With half our veteran army, I would march
- ‘ Through earth, triumphant; yet, that thou may’st
- ‘ know, 170
- ‘ In after times, what best may serve our cause,—
- ‘ IVAR’s experience hear!

‘ Inferior ills

- ‘ Leisure may combat, but to those alone—
- ‘ The mightiest, every Chief, whom wisdom guides

\* A Danish Giant, remarkable for his wisdom.

† A perpetual animosity subsisted between the Scandinavian Gods and Giants!

' At first directs his efforts, and subdues 175  
 ' The cubless Bear—loud howling, ere he seeks  
 ' The timid Ermine. Since I left this isle,  
 ' Thou the sole leader, why didst thou forget,  
 ' Britain that Bear, and on the Cambrian Ermine  
 ' Waste thy best strength? Behold the consequence!  
 ' I knew not better than thyself, the force—  
 ' The living-spring resources of his mind—  
 ' The British King; the valour he hath shewn,  
 ' The unconquerable firmness of his breast,  
 ' Who, in his youthful days, our ablest Chiefs 185  
 ' Laugh'd at, and worsted—making even Danes  
 ' Behold their equal. Why didst thou pursue  
 ' So mean a foe, ere on our mother earth  
 ' Lay ALFRED? See him on yon hill! Again  
 ' I ask thee, with imperious tone, how came 190  
 ' ODDUNE, that haughty foe, from Kenwith's walls  
 ' To baffle thee, surrounding, and escape  
 ' Thy hovering sword?'

HUBBA thus answer'd, ' Man!

' I scorn to call thee brother! Thou art one—  
 ' A stranger, whom I hate with most deep hate!  
 ' Instant the battle ceases, we will meet,  
 ' Death on our swords, destruction in our eyes!—  
 ' One to the earth shall fall—HUBBA, or thou!  
 ' When next thou sleepest, in thy dreams, beware,



- ‘ Lest thy brave father, breathing streams of fire, 200
- ‘ Draw near thy tent, and IVAR’s dastard soul
- ‘ Hurl to th’ infernal worlds ! Didst thou inquire,
- ‘ Proud mortal, why I ranged the Cambrian hills,
- ‘ Heedless of ALFRED ? Know ! I thought it right !
- ‘ What would’st thou more ? Upon the Saxon soil,
- ‘ No hostile army stood—no foe appear’d !
- ‘ ‘Mid woods and hills they wander’d; whom our  
swords
- ‘ Spared but to fall on this more glorious day.
- ‘ And didst thou too inquire why ODDUNE fled ?
- ‘ ‘Twas whilst I to the gods the victim blood, 210
- ‘ Pour’d, as our fathers taught. The Saxons saw
- ‘ And fled at midnight.

‘ Now let HUBBA ask

- ‘ Of lordly IVAR. Why didst thou refuse
- ‘ To slay the SAXON CAPTIVE ? Why didst thou,
- ‘ When HUBBA ask’d her blood, tell thy weak tale
- ‘ Of former terrors, and oppose the vow
- ‘ Gods heard me make ? Soon shall her life appease
- ‘ My vengeance, and the instant yonder foes
- ‘ Have slept in death, tho’ ODIN, from the clouds,
- ‘ With thund’ring voice, implored my wrath to cease,
- ‘ Yet would I answer him, scornful, and swear,
- ‘ Upon the coming morn her blood shall flow !
- ‘ IVAR ! thou blam’st my caution and would’st fain

' Make prudence thine alone: how was it proved,  
 ' When, having reach'd this shore, thou left'st our  
     fleet, 225  
 ' Unguarded, soon to blaze through Heaven's wide  
     vault  
 ' Thy matchless folly? When the hour arrives  
 ' That to th' assembled worlds, shall tell, who best,  
 ' The warrior's part has acted, who has slain, 230  
 ' Most foes, and to th' applauding gods can shew  
 ' The greater host of skulls obtain'd in fight;  
 ' Then shall be seen whose sword, thine or my own,  
 ' Best served the cause we fight for, and deserved  
 ' The noblest draughts of Heaven's immortal mead.'  
 He ceased. When IVAR, calm, thus answer'd him.

' Some crimes there are, and injuries so vast  
 ' And 'bove all recompence, that to repay—  
 ' In words, were, with a straw, to smite the man  
 ' Who aim'd to murder. I will answer thee, 240  
 ' Not, HUBBA! now,—not like thyself, with words,  
 ' But, like a Danish hero.—One must die!  
 ' IVAR or HUBBA! yet will we subdue,  
 ' First, yonder Saxons, then the time for us.  
 ' Soon as the fight is o'er—the Saxons slain— 245  
 ' Their King laid low; then will we shew our race  
 ' Whom most to honor!—By our fathers' gods,  
 ' Here do I swear, to end this day's offence

‘ Alone with blood !’

Cried HUBBA, ‘ Nobly said !  
 ‘ The same I swear ! IVAR, thy life or mine !’ 250  
 As then he look’d to Heaven, pausing from wrath,  
 And meditating some vindictive curse,  
 GUTHRUM return’d and cried, ‘ The hour is come !  
 ‘ The Saxon army marcheth ! Fly we fast !  
 ‘ ALFRED is near !’

The Chieftains grasp’d their swords,  
 Frantic for war; when HUBBA cried, ‘ Withhold !  
 ‘ Ere the fight rages, let us seek our gods !’  
 He said, and on the ground, cast his broad shield,  
 Him IVAR follow’d. Kneeling, both look’d up,  
 When, thus the Chief:

‘ ODIN ! immortal sire ! 260  
 ‘ Father of slaughter ! roaring deity !  
 ‘ Who on thy wings of fire, bearest through earth  
 ‘ Thick desolation ; who from Valhall’s halls  
 ‘ Callest the slain to join thee ;—vengeful god\*—  
 ‘ Thou who alone canst rouse the heart afresh, 265  
 ‘ When the shields clash, and uproar terrible  
 ‘ Rages in battle—heed thy servants’ prayer !—

\* Some of the titles of Odin.

' Give to the Danish sword yon Saxons' blood !  
 ' Yon impious race, whose gods are not our gods,  
 ' Whose altars shew no victims, whose delight 270  
 ' Thou dost not share, nor FREYA, nor great THOR—  
 ' Ruler of thunders ! therefore let them die !  
 ' Inspire our hearts with wrath, our swords with might,  
 ' That shall to quick perdition bear them all !'

He ceased, when both the brother Danes uprose,  
 And rushing like the war-horse to the fray,  
 Drew near their troops, that silent stood, whose hearts  
 Boil'd with black hate and wrath unquenchable ;  
 And when they saw their leaders, demon yells  
 Sounded through all the air, and savage roars 280  
 Like of the lion's whelp. IVAR then cried,  
 Casting his eye upon the Raven flag  
 That waved beside him, ' Lo ! it flaps its wings !  
 ' Subjects, rejoice ! the Raven flaps his wings !  
 ' Triumph is ours !' Again the loud shout rang,  
 When IVAR thus :

' Behold in yonder host  
 ' That enemy whom we so oft have fought,  
 ' So oft have vanquish'd, and who now shall meet  
 ' His final overthrow. Ye fearless host,  
 ' Ye vet'rans, whom my gallant father led 290  
 ' Through all the North, driving each foe, like chaff  
 ' Before the whirlwind, yet, to crown our toil,

- ‘ One task remains. There are the Saxons ! there
- ‘ Your only foe, whom meet, and Britain yields !
- ‘ Weak are their bucklers ! weak their puny arms ;
- ‘ Their hearts are weak ! Before our conquering  
sword,
- ‘ Each Saxon’s head must stoop, yet one request
- ‘ Make I, oh Danes ! Their Monarch, leave to me,
- ‘ Touch not one hair of ALFRED ! Let this sword
- ‘ Contend with his, and by th’ immortal gods— 300
- ‘ My might shall lay him low.’

Now through the air,  
He rais’d his monstrous arm, that like the limb  
Of some huge oak appear’d—the forest’s pride,  
Slow waving to the fury of the storm.  
Again he spake, ‘ One word and then for war. 305

- ‘ When to the plain beneath I lead ye down
- ‘ It is enough to see that ye are Danes,
- ‘ To know the issue, yet, let victory
- ‘ Glut not your rage ! nor stay the work of death
- ‘ ‘Till all are slain ! ‘till in one common flood 310
- ‘ Each Saxon, with their King, has drench’d the  
‘ ground.
- ‘ Behold the hostile ranks ! They court the fight !
- ‘ Shall we be backward ? Danes, behold your prey !’

F

Swift down the hill they rush, and in the plain  
 Meet the bold Saxon! Lo! the fight begins! 315  
 The battle rages! sword with sword hath met!  
 And hark the terrors of the sounding shield  
 That, like two sheets of ice, meet, and through  
     Heaven  
 Send their loud dissonance and horrid crash!

The snowy beard of some Norwegian crag, 320  
 High in the elements, that feels the blast  
 Shake its grey lock, and to the subject earth,  
 At length rolls headlong, spreading as it rolls,  
 One wide destruction, well displays the course  
 Of ALFRED's sword, as through the Danish ranks,  
 It breaks its way—strewing the plain with death;  
 Whilst IVAR, roused to madness, singly seeks  
 The Saxon King, scorning the mortal force  
 That dares oppose him.—Like the mountain brook,  
 Choak'd with the summer weed, that, with the storm,  
 Swoln into fury, urges on its way  
 Bursting all barriers.

See! The Chieftains meet!  
 ALFRED and IVAR! Blow for blow is given!—  
 Death-doing work is there! God aid the just!

END OF BOOK XVIII.

## ALFRED. BOOK XIX.

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 ARGUMENT.

*THE Danes defeated; Guthrum retreats to a near Castle; death of Hubba; burial of the slain; Oddune sent to demand Guthrum's surrender.*

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‘**S**PARE! Spare the vanquish’d!’ ALFRED cried:  
 ‘O spare,  
 ‘Subjects! the flying foe.’

The routed Danes  
 Swift from the fight escaped—the Saxons close  
 Press’d after them, tracking the ground with blood:  
 And such an overthrow no eye had seen! 5  
 The scatter’d forces of the Danes fled fast—  
 Crushing each other, ’till the fort they gain’d,  
 Adjoining, through whose gates they rush’d, all pale,  
 And trembling, as the solitary blade  
 On the wide desert when the tempest raves. 10

Up to the gate came **ODDUNE!** in his hand  
 He held a lance all crimson, and when safe  
 He saw the Danes—the huge gates sudden closed ;  
 Mists of uncertain form before his eyes  
 Awhile seem'd floating, and, amid the gust      15  
 Of momentary rage, he thought the walls  
 Parts of some monstrous and unfling foe,  
 At which he hurl'd his lance. When, thus he cried,  
 Turning to his near forces, 'Guard the gates!  
 'Now must I seek the King.'—

Forth to the vale

He eager sped, and **ALFRED** soon approach'd,  
 Who saw him not, intent on aiding those—  
 The wounded, who o'er all the plain were stretch'd,  
 Silent in agony, or, with a groan  
 Of numbing import, gazing stern on death;      25  
 When, looking up, **ALFRED** beheld the Chief!  
 He spake not, each the hand of fellowship  
 Gave, but in silence; when, at length, the King.

'**ODDUNE**, the song of praise! Let the heart speak  
 'With voice articulate, for less than this      30  
 'Would make the very stones cry out 'for shame!'  
 'The fight is o'er! The victory now is ours!  
 'Behold the Danish standard! see the flag  
 'Danes trusted in! but, through Almighty power,



' With lion strength endued, this reeking hand    35  
 ' Grasp'd, the proud Raven, whilst the other clave  
 ' IVAR in twain.    Say, what the fate of HUBBA?'

ODDUNE thus answer made.    ' In the past fight,  
 ' I saw a monstrous man, bulwark'd by slain,  
 ' Whose look was terror, and whose every blow    40  
 ' Gave death a victim.    Many a Saxon brave  
 ' Lay low before him, when I knew the Chief—  
 ' HUBBA, and rush'd to war.    The strife was hard!  
 ' He fell!    This trusty sword, beat him to earth!  
 ' And, as 'mid gore he writhed, I sought again    45  
 ' The hotter battle.'—

ALFRED cried, ' Brave man,  
 ' This deed became thee!    Point the spot where lay  
 ' The hostile Chief!    If yet he live, this heart,  
 ' Forgetful of the past, will show what wrongs,  
 ' Saxons can bear and pardon.'

As they sought    50  
 The fallen warrior, ODDUNE said, ' Oh King,  
 ' Say where the brother, IVAR, that fierce man,  
 ' Whose frown yet awes my soul.' ALFRED replied,  
 ' Soon shalt thou see the Chieftain.    At this time,  
 ' It is enough to tell thee he is dead,    55  
 ' To say, I slew him.    GUTHRUM, where is he?

‘ And where that other name, dear to my heart—  
 ‘ Where is **ALSWITHA** ?’

**ODDUNE** cried, ‘ This sword  
 ‘ Pursued the Danish Chieftain up yon hill  
 ‘ To the near Fort. Thou se’st it ! Thither sped 60  
 ‘ **GUTHRUM**, and a few foll’wers, breathless, wild,  
 ‘ Doubting if ‘live or dead. I saw the gates,  
 ‘ Before the Saxons reach’d, close on them. Round,  
 ‘ Now are thy troops, and doubtless there abides—  
 ‘ Our Queen **ALSWITHA**.’—

**ALFRED** said, ‘ Heaven grant  
 ‘ Thy words no fable !’

Now they reach the spot  
 Where **HUBBA** was. Thick as autumnal leaves  
 ‘ Neath some tall tree, ‘mid forest unexplored,  
 Where never wind approaches, round the Chief  
 Lay death. And when he mark’d—**ALFRED** draw  
                     near, 70

And Him who laid him low, he rais’d his frame,  
 Then grown unwieldy, with hard, labouring toil,  
 And met their eyes undaunted. Thus the King :  
 ‘ Dane ! we are friends. This day hath seen our wrath  
 ‘ Vanish ! All help attend thee ! Thou may’st learn,  
 ‘ Yet, ere thou die, the Saxon character—

' In combat, pitiless, in vict'ry, mild.  
 ' Receive our aid !' When, instant HUBBA look'd,  
 Stern as when Winter darts his arrowy flakes  
 On some lone trav'ler, casting his full eye 80  
 Now at the King, at ODDUNE, now around  
 On many a breathless corse ; yet not a word  
 Deign'd he to speak, he heaved no groan, he mark'd,  
 Unmoved, the circling spoil ; when, with a frown  
 More terrible, he grasp'd a dagger, near, 85  
 And plung'd it to his heart. Thus HUBBA died !

Awhile they stood and wonder'd, when the King,  
 Cried, ' Other scenes await us ! ODDUNE, now,  
 ' Assist the wounded ! be the hour improved  
 ' With all humanity, and let not one— 90  
 ' Not e'en a Dane, from Saxon hand, receive  
 ' Requiring cruelty.'—

ODDUNE, the words  
 Heard, and departed ; whilst the King himself  
 Fled through the fallen ranks—upheld the faint,  
 Relieved the dying, succour'd those who bled,  
 And to new deeds of kindness prompted each  
 Of all around him.

One there was, a Dane,  
 Who at his mangled limbs, lay laughing loud,

And as the King advanc'd, near to the spot,  
 He saw the foe was aged, and prepared 100  
 To cheer him. When the Dane exclaim'd :

‘ Away !

‘ I only ask thee, Warrior! with thy sword  
 ‘ To finish the good work; for, here to die,  
 ‘ Seek I most earnest.\* Give some Saxon, near,  
 ‘ Thine aid, I ask it not! I, for this hour, 105  
 ‘ That soon shall give me freedom and bestow  
 ‘ Immortal honors, have endured all ills,  
 ‘ All hardships, heedless; borne the battle’s brunt  
 ‘ Through many a clime; and often have I fear’d  
 ‘ This death was not appointed. I have err’d! 110  
 ‘ I feel the searching pangs, that tell me, soon  
 ‘ The strife will cease! I hear the God of War!  
 ‘ I see him there! he beckons me to come,  
 ‘ And in his hand he bears the frothy mead.  
 ‘ I come! I come!’ When, heaving his last breath,  
 He laugh’d and died!—

ALFRED beheld the sight,  
 And ponder’d, with a sad and downcast brow :  
 A sigh escaped, and in his heart he cried,

\* The love of a violent death, and an insensibility to danger, were remarkable features in the character of the Danes.

‘ Oh Lord, thy kingdom come !’

After long toil;

When each had known all succour and all care;  
 And Mercy, with the full meal satisfied,  
 Turn’d from the feast; ALFRED aloud exclaim’d,  
 ‘ Saxons, approach !’ To hear their monarch’s words,  
 Obedient, they drew near, list’ning so still,  
 As when some spacious grove slumber o’ertakes,  
 And every tree and leaf exalts itself,  
 And, looking to the Father of the skies,  
 Worships in silence. ALFRED thus began :

‘ Brave Saxons ! with what joy I meet you all—

‘ What ecstasy, past language, now to say, 130

‘ The fight is o’er!—The day is won ! This hour,

‘ Britain is saved ! Where is the haughty Dane ?

‘ Where are the men, whose impious tongues pronounced

‘ Our certain fates, and, on the morn, defied,

‘ The God our fathers honor’d ? Where are they

‘ Who with presumptuous pride, aloud proclaim’d

‘ This day should be our last ? Behold them there !

‘ Bathed in their gore. Where, Saxons ! are the men

‘ Whom late you dreaded ? whose victorious swords

‘ Ye fled from, ’till this moment—heard aghast,

‘ The scream you could not succour, and beheld,

' The flaming brand your dwellings light upon,  
 ' And knew no choice, but, death or sudden flight ?  
 ' Where are the men, who with vindictive wrath  
 ' Stalk'd through the land, and with their swords de-  
     stroy'd 145  
 ' What the flames left us—There! behold them there!  
 ' Where are the men, who on their reeking spears  
 ' Toss'd our mild infants, and the aged slew—  
 ' The fathers and the mothers of us all ?  
 ' Behold them there! Silent and stretch'd in death,

' This is a proud day for the Saxon name!  
 ' This is a Fight that through succeeding years  
 ' Shall sound our praises, and from hosts unborn  
 ' Demand the grateful song: We hence will teach  
 ' Our infant Sons, while smiling on our knee, 155  
 ' To lisp with pride, the name, to Britons dear,  
 ' Conjoin'd with which, all pleasant thoughts arise,—  
 ' The Name of EDDINGTON !

' Subjects, rejoice !

' Our toils are o'er ! This green and fertile land  
 ' Now may we till ! our homes made doubly dear,  
 ' Shall greet their masters, and one gen'ral joy  
 ' Spread through our native land !' As when some  
     blast  
 Sweeps o'er the forest, and with thundering roar,

Sounds long and loud; whilst e'en the prostrate thorn,  
 With its faint voice, swells the loud chorus higher;  
 Such was the voice of Saxons, when they cried,  
 ' God and our King !' Through all the concave  
                   spread

The loud acclaim, whilst here and there, with pangs  
 Struggling, the wounded caught the gen'ral joy—  
 The maddening ecstasy, and feebly cried,           170  
 ' God and our King !'

                                  After due course, again,  
 ALFRED address'd them. ' Saxons ! to me, sweet  
 ' Your universal rapture, and the more,  
 ' For that you think of God. He is our friend !  
 ' His hand is manifest !—Rejoice with fear,   175  
 ' And shout with trembling ! lest in being thus,  
 ' From bondage rescued, and most galling chains,  
 ' Your hearts be harden'd, and ye look to Heaven,  
 ' Not from th' adoring eye, but, from the pride  
 ' That fills your souls—which ever will be found  
 ' The presage of destruction.

                                  ' I would now  
 ' Speak of our fallen brethren. Honor'd men,  
 ' In dust laid low—receive our grateful praise !  
 ' Tho' sunk in death, tho' from this glorious hour—  
 ' This day of triumph taken ; tho' denied       185

' That earthly recompence, which now, ere long,  
 ' Your brethren we shall taste ; ages unborn  
 ' Shall shout your worth, and we will honor you,  
 ' Injured and noble spirits ! If there live,  
 ' And that there does, we must not, cannot doubt,  
 ' A God of Justice, who of human ways  
 ' Takes cognizance, His piercing eye beholds  
 ' The virtuous man, 'mid trials such as yours,  
 ' And doubtless hath prepared in Heaven above,  
 ' Some jasper throne—some unimagined good, 195  
 ' For those who in their country's cause may bleed.'

When the King ended, not as heretofore,  
 Rose the loud plaudit, but a sober joy—  
 A calm and peaceful grief, through all their hearts,  
 Stole like the summer eve, when the sun fades, 200  
 And quietly retireth, unperceived.

' Now,' ALFRED cried, ' the rights of sepulture !  
 ' Speedfast and form the grave. First for each friend,  
 ' Each Saxon.'—

Whilst the ready hosts obey'd,  
 ALFRED, and that true friend, that valiant man,  
 ODDUNE, through all the field of blood passed slow,  
 Musing on human glory, and the end  
 Of those who like the Danes but lived for war.



' Screen me,' cried ALFRED, ' oh thou Power on  
 high!  
 ' From the dark passions—fierce and deadly strifes,  
 ' Which quench the heavenly spark, and to a fiend,  
 ' Transform thy likeness imaged forth in man.  
 ' Is life so small a thing, so little worth,  
 ' That we should with it sport in idleness,  
 ' And for some fancied, momentary good,      215  
 ' Hazard our all? resign the precious gift—  
 ' This state of being? scorn th' imperious voice  
 ' Of duty here—the soothing promises  
 ' Of joys hereafter, and unbidden rush  
 ' Before Heaven's great tribunal? Such do those  
 ' Who deal in blood, who on their peaceful beds  
 ' Hatch murder, and war's dread vicissitudes.  
 ' Not on the rude and giddy multitude  
 ' Heap I these charges! Man's too ductile mind  
 ' Receives impressions from the wiser few,      220  
 ' Or good or bad, and like the horse to battle,  
 ' Hears, and unthinking rushes on to death.

' Now, royalty shines on me! now, I sway  
 ' A nation's sceptre; now, I view around  
 ' Obedient thousands, and behold no foe      230  
 ' To check the secret purpose of my mind—  
 ' May I discharge the duties of a crown!  
 ' Oh ODDUNE! let the man who coldly thinks,  
 ' And feebly executes, check, with disdain,

- ‘ Godlike benevolence, and meanly creep,      235
- ‘ Through a long reign, that loud demands the race
- ‘ Of glory and true usefulness, yet I,
- ‘ Nursing great views of man’s important ends,
- ‘ Will prize the thought, soul-moving, that on Kings
- ‘ A nation’s worth and happiness depend.—      235
- ‘ Not as the baseless visions of the night,
- ‘ Be these my thoughts, oh Searcher of all hearts !’

The King and ODDUNE now drew near the spot,  
 Where, in the past fight, busiest, death had been ;  
 And there lay IVAR ! ALFRED saw the Chief, 240  
 And, tho’ he breathless lay, approach’d him slow,  
 Half doubting, lest his goary corse might rise  
 In madder fury than before, and dart—  
 Sudden destruction ; for his hand yet grasp’d  
 The monstrous sword which at the King had struck  
 And pierced his helmet, with the brazen shield  
 Scorning to stay. When ALFRED spake the Chief :

- ‘ Here lies our foe, once fear’d, but now no more !
- ‘ Here should our vengeance cease. This sight, I  
     mourn ;
- ‘ For never, ODDUNE, will a Christian see
- ‘ A fellow man, consign’d to darkness, sunk,
- ‘ In error, and o’erpower’d with all the woes
- ‘ Hate genders— darkest child of hell ! nor feel

' Pangs at his heart press heavy. Let us now  
 ' Bestow funereal honors on these men—  
 ' IVAR and HUBBA. Let us for the dead,  
 ' Here on this memorable plain, erect  
 ' The lofty Barrow,\* that posterity  
 ' Often may visit where in quietness  
 ' Lie the fierce-Spoilers, Britons once o'erpower'd.'  
 He said and call'd attention. Thus he spake :

' One task there yet remains ! Take this huge corse,  
 ' What once was IVAR ! and that other Chief,  
 ' HUBBA, who 'mid yon deathful heap abides,  
 ' Tow'ring above his fellows : round them place  
 ' Their thousands slain, and o'er them heap the earth ;  
 ' That after years, beholding, may rejoice  
 ' At this proud triumph o'er our country's foes.  
 ' Yet, first regard your Monarch. Stands there one,  
 ' Now round, who knows of Ethelney's near isle ?'  
 When from the farthest throng, voices arose,  
 ' We know it well,' and straight two youths appear'd.  
 The King survey'd them earnestly, then said,

\* An old English Chronicle, called, " Brute of England,"  
 says, " When Hungar (Ivar) and Hubba died, thei bare  
 theym to a mountayn ther bysyde, and made upon theym a  
 logge (Barrow) and lete call it Hubbslugh, and so itt is to this  
 day in Dehenshir. '

- ‘ Did you not stand beside me in the fight,
- ‘ And do me service?’ One, the elder, cried,
- ‘ We did, oh, King! When three fierce Danes  
press’d on,
- ‘ And would have slain thee whilst thou stroved’st  
hard
- ‘ With IVAR, we, between, rush’d and in dust
- ‘ Laid them all low. Content with serving thee,
- ‘ Th’ event we had not named but to comply,
- ‘ Sov’reign! with thy command.’

ALFRED replied,

- ‘ Brave youths! tho’ ’mid the fight engaged, mine  
eye
- ‘ Glimps’d you beside me, and a certain sense,
- ‘ Confused, of danger, struck my mind, unknown
- ‘ Till this good moment. Take your Monarch’s  
thanks!
- ‘ Hereafter will I deal you due reward :
- ‘ For never have I found true modesty
- ‘ Not near allied to worth. But now, declare,
- ‘ What know you of the isle of Ethelney ?

‘ From thence we come,’ they answer’d, ‘ ’tis our  
home;

- ‘ We are CEOLRIC’s sons—an honest man,
- ‘ Who there, with ACCA our good mother, dwells.’

' Ah ! is it so ? ' cried ALFRED, ' this, indeed,  
 ' Comes to my heart ! and you will shortly know  
 ' My meaning. Haste to Ethelney and tell  
 ' ACCA, your mother, and your honest sire—  
 ' CÆOLRIC, forth to leave their cot, and bring,  
 ' With wonted care, an infant child, of late,  
 ' To them committed. Speed ! And let the man—  
 ' SIGBERT, who there abides, guard him with you.'

The Rose in Paradise, when Adam fell,  
 That saw itself invested first with thorns,  
 If, as some feign, endued with consciousness,  
 Felt not such wonder as these youths. They bow'd,  
 And with conjectures, opposite and wild,  
 Hasted to seek their homes.—

' Now, ' ALFRED, cried,  
 ' View the unburied Danes, and heap the pile,—  
 ' Commemorating.' At their Monarch's words,  
 They turn'd, and o'er the slain upplied the earth,  
 Stripping its surface, 'till at length there stood,  
 A mountain by apparent magic rear'd.\*  
 Whilst thus engaged, ALFRED to ODDUNE spake.

\* Barrows, were often formed over those who had been  
 slain in battle, by the surviving soldiers carrying their *helmets*  
 full of earth, and continuing by these small means, 'till often

' Tho' in my country's greater cause engaged,  
 ' And silent of ALSWITHA, now my heart,  
 ' Blameless, may think of her. Not yet, indeed,  
 ' Complete the triumph, whilst in yonder fort  
 ' GUTHRUM abides. Haste to him and demand  
 ' Instant submission. Thou canst well direct  
 ' Proper discourse; but if thou fail, require  
 ' That female Captive—whom, thou need'st not  
     name.  
 ' ODDUNE add this to all thy services—  
 ' Not thrown away.'

The Chieftain press'd his heart,  
 And sped to bear the summons to the Dane.

considerable hills were formed. Some who have not been  
 aware of this practice have expressed surprise that artificial  
 hills should be formed, on a plain, without exhibiting any  
 excavations, from whence the earth could have been taken.

END OF BOOK XIX.

## ALFRED. BOOK XX.

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### ARGUMENT.

*WHILE Guthrum, in the Castle to which he had retired, is consulting with his troops, Oddune arrives; demands his submission to Alfred; is refused; claims Guthrum's Captive; Alswitha receives her liberty; her interview with Alfred.*

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**D**EATH! Death!' cried GUTHRUM, as he  
 pass'd the gate  
 Of the near castle, with the wretched few  
 Who 'scap'd the fight. 'Death, death,' the Chief-  
 tain cried,  
 'Why hast thou lagged so heavily? Why thus  
 'Spared me for anguish, such as never man      5  
 'Felt 'till this hour? Why 'mid our brethren slain  
 'Lay not this head? Now, hither am I come  
 'To taste the bitterness of death, yet lose  
 'Its cheering comforts. Curse these coward legs!

‘ They urged the flight! Give me yon axe, my hands  
 ‘ Shall punish you, oh traitors!’ Forth he grasp’d  
 A massy axe, and stood as he would strike—  
 When far he cast it. ‘ Not for partial death,  
 ‘ Seek I,’ he cried, ‘ but death complete and full.’

Turning to those around, wrathful he spake. 15  
 ‘ Why are ye here? oh Danes! Ye heartless throng!  
 ‘ Why fled you hither? Cowards! scorn of men!  
 ‘ Yet, why was I a coward! Why did I,  
 ‘ Shrink from destruction, when I saw the fight  
 ‘ Lost and all over! This disastrous hour 20  
 ‘ Probes deep our spirits. Since the fight is lost,  
 ‘ And our reward gone by, say what awaits  
 ‘ To save our honor?’

One replied, ‘ A deed,  
 ‘ If not prolong our lives, may yet display  
 ‘ Our rage remorseless. When the night draws near,  
 ‘ Let us through yonder gate rush boldly forth,  
 ‘ And ALFRED strive to slay, that only foe  
 ‘ Danes ever fear’d. Altho’ our death be sure,  
 ‘ Yet shall this act, Death of his sting disarm.’

GUTHRUM exclaim’d: ‘ Thou worthless coun-  
 seller! 30  
 ‘ Fly, or a speedier death shall light on thee!



‘ As the last hour draws near, when we must quit  
 ‘ This state of warfare, and from gods receive,  
 ‘ Honors, proportion’d to our valour here ;  
 ‘ Would’st thou at such a time, degenerate Dane !  
 ‘ Imbitter death, with this atrocious deed  
 ‘ Of cold unmanly murder ? If we fight,  
 ‘ Let the broad day-light see us ! let us meet  
 ‘ The equal contest, clashing sword with sword,  
 ‘ When the sun shines, and honest men can look,  
 ‘ Nor feel resentment.—All beyond is shame !  
 ‘ The midnight murd’rer, gods and men abhor !\*  
 ‘ Base Dane, away !

‘ But, to preserve ourselves,  
 ‘ That well befits us. Warriors ! ye who thus  
 ‘ Survive the fight, and, now surround, with look  
 ‘ All ghastly, from amazement, yet alive ;  
 ‘ Before I tell you what to me appears  
 ‘ Best to assist us, I will first declare,  
 ‘ Why we are here, and why the gods have cast  
 ‘ Darkness before us ; why we lost the day,      50  
 ‘ And now are left, wretched and hopeless men,  
 ‘ Buried in shame.—It was our Leaders’ wrath !

\* The Danes held it dishonourable to surprise an enemy  
 by night.

‘Peace to their memories! ’twas their rancorous  
strife!

‘Which at the hour of battle, made them feel

‘Hate, for each other, rather than the foe.— 53

‘Low lie they both! and of the Danish ranks,

‘Great in their numbers! greater in their might!

‘We only live! this little host, ordain’d

‘To suffer for the follies we deplored

‘Yet could not remedy. But, fruitless now 60

‘To ponder on disasters, wiser far

‘To think how best to act,’

Debating then,

With counsels opposite, the hours pass’d by,

When one the spot approach’d and said, ‘Oh Chief,

‘A Saxon asks to see thee! Shall we ope 65

‘The massy gates, and give him entrance?’ ‘Yes!’

Answer’d the Chief. ‘Conduct him here! our hearts

‘Well can sustain his taunts.’ ODDUNE drew near,

And to th’ indignant GUTHRUM thus began :

‘I come, oh Dane! from ALFRED our great King

‘Instant to claim submission. Spread your gates!

‘Go forth, and on his mercy trust for life!

‘So haply may you live.’ To which the Dane :

‘Herald, we spurn thy words! Here are we safe,

' A little space, and never will we leave 75  
 ' These walls to die by ALFRED, in some hour  
 ' Of scoffing merriment. Saxon, depart!—  
 ' Talk not of mercy! I too long have lived,  
 ' And known the human heart too well, to think  
 ' Mercy can sojourn in a victor's breast 80  
 ' Where wrongs like ours have roused his appetite.  
 ' If the robb'd she-wolf met thee in her way,  
 ' Would'st thou then trust her mercy, or, confide  
 ' In thine own valour? Saxon, such will I!—  
 ' Thy proffer we disdain! Vanquish'd we are, 85  
 ' Yet not subdued. Here will we perish all!  
 ' Fly swift and tell thy King our fix'd resolve.'

ODDUNE replied, ' Oh Dane in ALFRED trust!  
 ' Nor of his heart, judge by thine own. He lives  
 ' To shew mankind, some lofty conduct; high,  
 ' Beyond the common rule, and long will live  
 ' Posterity's bright model. Well I know,  
 ' Our Monarch boasts a heart, the which to trust,  
 ' E'en *thou* may'st-venture.' 'Never!' cried the Dane.  
 ' Our oaths are pass'd, and like our gallant race,  
 ' Here will we stay!—defend this last retreat,  
 ' With courage of so bold and fierce a kind,  
 ' That even ALFRED's self, shall stand amazed,  
 ' And question his own sight. Now, Saxon, hear!

' It may not suit thy mode of thought, to learn  
 ' What Dane hath done ; and thou may'st listen  
     to me,  
 ' And at an old man smile. But I *must* speak !

' For three-score years hath GUTHRUM urged  
     the fight,  
 ' Through kingdoms distant, with barbarians fierce,  
 ' With Frank and Saxon, and 'till this hard time  
 ' Never endured defeat ! This trusty sword  
 ' Hath combated, 'till death itself denied  
 ' The further victim. Never have I slept  
 ' Beneath th' inglorious roof,\* or drank my mead,  
 ' In base seclusion ! I have met the war  
 ' 'Mid cliffs of ice, and mountains, white with frost,  
 ' Whilst we appear'd, 'mid the thick falling flakes  
 ' And arrowy sleet, columns of stalking snow.  
 ' This heart hath dared all perils ! I have oft  
 ' Pillow'd my head upon the corse I slew  
 ' And heedless slept amid the war of winds,  
 ' Seeking most faithfully to serve my gods,  
 ' And prove my valour. Yet, at length o'erpower'd!  
 ' Now doom'd to perish ! Not in honor's cause,

\* It was not uncommon for a Dane to boast, that he had  
 never slept beneath an immoveable roof, or drank mead by  
 his own fire side.

' Not in the well-fought battle, but e'en here !—  
 ' Here in this place, the mean unworthy death  
 ' Of slaves and traitors ! Yet, thy King inform,  
 ' Tho' die we must, brave will we die ! This gate  
 ' The last of living Danes shall guard, and raise,  
 ' Even in death, his feeble arm, to stay 125  
 ' The Saxons' entrance. Now depart and tell  
 ' All thou hast heard !'

ODDUNE replied, ' Thy words;  
 ' Truly will I convey. Dane ! there is One,  
 ' Within the Saxon camp, of no mean worth,  
 ' Whose wife thou late didst bear away, since which,  
 ' Sorrow hath been his guest. Say, where she is,  
 ' And if within these walls, wilt thou release her ?'

' I know to whom thou pointest,' GUTHRUM cried.  
 ' A Captive, whom I love, with such pure love,  
 ' As the fond father feels—she is most dear ! 135  
 ' My daughter *loved* her too.' The old man ceased.  
 He wept, then thus again : ' But as thou say'st  
 ' An honest man her husband, who, I trust,  
 ' Knows how to prize her, she shall be releas'd.—  
 ' Unknowing of this fatal day's defeat, 140  
 In yonder tent she sits, silent as night !  
 ' Take her, and forth depart !'—

ODDUNE withdrew,

And now the tent had enter'd. Musing sad  
 He saw a woman; on the earth, her eye  
 Intensely pored, heedless of coming foot. 145  
 Her cheek was pale ! When ODDUNE clasp'd his  
     hands,  
 And cried, ' My Queen !'

As one who in the dark  
 Sees, or believes he sees, some passing shape,  
 And, starting, looks aghast; so at these words  
 ALSWITHA rose, and with astonishment 150  
 Halfwild exclaim'd, ' What art thou ?' ODDUNE said.  
 ' I am indeed thy friend, and ALFRED's friend !—  
 ' ODDUNE, well known.'

Not more surprised the man,  
 Who at the world's remotest point, beholds  
 On some tall rock, in well-known characters, 155  
 His name, distinct and clear, than felt the Queen  
 At these, the Chieftain's words. Doubting she cried,  
 ' Is it some horrid phantom, to involve  
 ' This heart in more inextricable grief?—  
 ' Oh no ! I know thee ! Speak, or soon, my mind  
 ' Madness will seize ?' ' Forbear, my injured Queen !  
 ' I now can only tell thee, thou art free !  
 ' And I am thy Conductor. Follow fast,  
 ' Or danger yet may lurk !'—

Up she arose ;

A wild uncertainty hung o'er her brow ; 165

Then, leaning on the mailed Chieftain's arm,

She pass'd the gate. When thus the Queen exclaim'd :

' Is ALFRED safe ? ' ' He is ! ' the warrior said ;

' ALFRED is safe ! and Britain now is free ! '

' Free ! ' said ALSWITHA, ' What ! Thou dreamest !

Speak !'

170

ODDUNE replied, ' Britain indeed is free !—

' Seest thou, oh Queen ! yonder increasing pile ?

' Beneath it lie the Danes ! Thousands are there !

' And 'mid the multitude, this day o'erthrown,

' IVAR and HUBBA ! '—

' Tell me yet no more !'

ALSWITHA cried, ' My brain is hot ! Oh God,

' Spare my weak intellect !' Again she spake,

' Where now is ALFRED ? Gallant Chieftain, say !

' And GUTHRUM ! where ? Is he amid the slain ?—

' High Heaven, I trust, hath spared that good old

' man !'

When ODDUNE ; ' He is spared ! In that same fort,

' Whence thou art hast'ning, he abides, and vows

' To perish there, rather than to receive,

' Mercy from ALFRED.'

' Hath he learn'd my name ?

Inquired the Queen. ' If not, it may be well !'  
 ' No !' answer'd ODDUNE. ' Little knew the Dane,  
 ' Who was his Captive, On th' opposing hill  
 ' ALFRED awaits, with heart-devouring care,  
 ' To learn my message, and if yet thou liv'st  
 ' To crown his happiness.' ALSWITHA cried, 190  
 ' This is felicity ! But, where my Child ?  
 ODDUNE distressful answer'd, ' Of thy Child,  
 ' Nothing I know, tho' doubtless he is safe.'  
 ' Oh no !' replied the Queen. ' He is not safe—  
 ' Save in a better world.'—

The sudden tear, 195

Suffused her eye ! and silent they pass'd on.  
 When, calmly, thus she spake. ' I would not mourn  
 ' At Heaven's all-wise disposal ; I have much  
 ' That calls for gratitude ;—Myself preserved?  
 ' My better self in ALFRED ; and the hope 200  
 ' That quietness may bless his future reign.—  
 ' I would forget my child !—Sweet babe, adieu !'

' But are not these deceptions ? Am I safe ?  
 ' Is it no vain deceit of fairy land  
 ' Where all is happiness but, shadowy ? Chief ?  
 ' Let me behold thee ! Truly thou dost look  
 ' Like faithful ODDUNE ! art thou truly him ?'  
 ' Truly,' replied the Chief ! ' and thou art now



' Queen of this lovely Isle, and long I trust  
 ' Ordain'd to grace its throne.' ' But say! she cried,  
 ' How came these things—these changes wonderful?  
 ' Which make my very being seem a dream,  
 ' And all my past conceptions, words and deeds,  
 ' Partaking of some unsubstantial form  
 ' And link'd with very nothing.' ODDUNE forth,  
 Declared of Ethelney, of Selwood's shade,  
 Of Kenwith, of th' avenging flames that burnt  
 The hostile fleet, and of the Danish camp  
 Which ALFRED visited.

' Oh name it not!  
 Cried the pale Queen. ' I saw thy Monarch there!  
 ' The terror, the dismay, which through my frame,  
 ' Rush'd at that hour, fain would I blot from out  
 ' My burden'd mem'ry! As we journey on  
 ' Complete thy story!' ODDUNE told the Queen  
 Of the past fight.

Each circumstance she heard, 225  
 Looking like one, who through the charnel-house  
 At dead of night doth roam, for penance due,  
 Or, to relate to gaping auditors,  
 What shapes were seen, all white and terrible,  
 At the still hour, when fancy, unconfined, 230  
 Sees clearer for the darkness, and beholds,

Each soul-o'erwhelming spectacle, when ghosts  
Have their night revels.

Through the vale they pass'd,  
Thus communing; and now they near approach'd  
The tent, where ALFRED was. ODDUNE then spake:  
' I would draw nigh the King, if seem thee fit,  
' And first address him, lest the sudden gust  
' Of rapture, half o'erpower his lab'ring mind.'  
' Depart' replied the Queen: ' I at the door  
' Will wait thy signal.'

ODDUNE saw the tent,  
And enter'd. At his sight the King uprose,  
Then, starting back, exclaim'd, ' ODDUNE, no Queen!  
' I fear to ask thee! yet, thou may'st proceed!  
' *I think* I can endure to hear the tale!'  
ODDUNE began. ' First will I name, oh King!  
' Of GUTHRUM. He disdains thy words, and swears  
' To perish in yon castle.' ALFRED cried,  
' What tidings of ALSWITHA? now declare!  
' Yet, stay awhile! I cannot hear it yet!—  
' Speak on!'

ODDUNE replied, ' I ask'd the Dane  
' Of one, his Captive; claim'd her liberty.  
' Take her! the Chieftain cried. Yonder she dwells!  
' I found her! brought her safe! and now she waits,  
' Monarch, at thy tent door!'

ALSWITHA heard,

And instant enter'd! To the King she rush'd! 255

ALFRED beheld her! In each other's arms,  
Speechless they stand! It was the moment full  
Of holy feeling, when the spirit drinks  
Deep of the soul of harmony, and spurns  
The intermediate office of vain words. 260

When, after solemn pause, ALFRED exclaim'd.

' Beloved ALSWITHA! God of Heaven inspire,

' This heart with everlasting gratitude!'

The Queen essay'd to speak; she only wept!

Their tears were mingled; when, at length, the King,

' But I must hear thy tale. Where hast thou been?'

' What further hast thou suffer'd? best beloved!

' What ills indured that I know nothing of?'

ALSWITHA check'd the tear that would have flow'd;

When, thus she answered, dignified, yet mild, 270

Looking attention; ' As I told thee once,

' If e'er thou saw me living, thou should'st find,

' My soul still pure!—Before my gracious Lord,

' Such do I stand! and thou art still the same—

' Sole inmate, and sole idol of my heart." 275

ALFRED exclaim'd, leaning on her he loved,

' Saints envy not, or they might think of me!

END OF BOOK XX.

## ALFRED. BOOK XXI.

---

 ARGUMENT.

*ALSWITHA relates the events which had happened to her since she had separated from Alfred.*

---

ALFRED and ODDUNE had survey'd the Camp,  
 As fitted Chieftains, when they back return'd,  
 Anxious to hear, the brief-suspended tale,  
 How fared ALSWITHA, since that fatal hour  
 When GUTHRUM seized, and with unpaying heart  
 Bore her away. ALSWITHA thus began :

‘ My lord, my husband, thou for whom my heart  
 ‘ Its keenest pangs hath felt, I need not say  
 ‘ What joy this hour affords me, from the change  
 ‘ Which Heaven hath wrought. Oh ALFRED ! oh  
     my Lord ! 10  
 ‘ Great is God’s mercy ! He hath veil’d himself  
 ‘ But to shine forth more glorious ; He hath frown’d,  
 ‘ And for a little moment hid his face,  
 ‘ To try the heart he loved, and purify  
 ‘ By ill and crosses—Wisdom’s ministers ! 15

' Thou askest me to name the varied scenes,  
 ' This heart hath known, since, 'mid the Abbey walls,  
 ' We cried farewell. These scenes, had I the power,  
 ' Should with oblivion dwell, and every shade  
 ' Of past remembrance, die away, no more 20  
 ' To rouse my dormant soul. Yet thou hast ask'd,  
 ' And I will tell thee, tho' it cost me dear.

' But three long days after thou bad'st adieu,  
 ' We, from the Abbey turrets, spied the Danes,  
 ' Fierce coming on. A sight that made us look, 25  
 ' Yet speak not, each with terror pale. At length,  
 ' They reach'd the walls! Their hideous yells were  
     heard!  
 ' Their torches flash'd! Their blows, the ponderous  
     gates  
 ' Answer'd with deaf'ning roar! Each look'd to God.

' The Abbot was a Christian, good and true, 30  
 ' And when thou wentest, often talk'd of thee,  
 ' And prais'd thy words, and loved thy little babe;  
 ' And when he saw the wasting Danes draw nigh,  
 ' He trembled. Hear, he cried, that noise! The gates,  
 ' Long cannot stand. Give me the babe!' he said,  
 (Turning to me) and fled—he knew not where;  
 ' I follow'd. In my heart there was no fear,  
 ' I did not think of thee, my babe forgot!

' For with excess of feeling, feeling fled !  
 ' I seem'd a stone become ! But from this dream  
 ' Loud groans awak'd me ! for the doors were forced !  
 ' The wrathful Danes throughout the place spread  
     death !

' Now, could I hear the miserable cry,  
 ' Of mercy ! mercy ! In the Abbot's face  
 ' Appear'd despair. I cried, Give me the child ! 40  
 ' Resolved to fly, yet little knowing how.  
 ' The Abbot answer'd, Woman, follow me !  
 ' Not certain, yet is death !—but hark !—the noise !  
 ' The flames, they rage ! Upward I look'd and view'd  
 ' Thick smoke and fire !—Again, heart-rending cries !  
 ' We saw hope gone ! I think, the Abbot said,  
 ' Oh God, Thou yet art great ! Vouchsafe thine aid !  
 ' Oh God deliver us ! Which said, he rush'd  
 ' Across the court—I follow'd him ! We reach'd  
 ' The wall that bounded it ! High Heaven inspir'd,  
 ' Our limbs with strength miraculous ; and soon  
 ' We climb'd its height, 'mid smoke and the loud cry  
 ' Of death around us. Down the Abbot leap'd !  
 ' He had my child ! I follow'd ! Down I leap'd !  
 ' When to the earth I came, I look'd around 55  
 ' For child or guide, all was one waste of smoke !  
 ' Forward I sped, impetuous, but in vain ;  
 ' Yet still I ran, fleet as the bounding Roe,

- ‘ For hope still whisper’d further was my child !—
- ‘ I saw him not ! Distracting thought ! He died ! 60
- ‘ The Danish sword, fell on his tender head !
- ‘ Low, lies my infant !—Tho’ Thy will be done.
- ‘ Oh God ! I would have kept him here !’

### The King

- Seem’d prone to speak, yet check’d himself ; when thus
- ALSWITHA cried : ‘ Soon to some trees I came, 65
- ‘ And from ~~the~~ thicket stood, and look’d around.
- ‘ When o’er the plain the fierce wind swept along,
- ‘ And for a moment made all clear, I saw—
- ‘ Ruin before me—one vast heap of fire !
- ‘ And tho’ far distant, yet upon the gale, 70
- ‘ Fitful, that pass’d along, I could perceive
- ‘ The voice of dying man, faint, but most clear,
- ‘ That made my feverish and tumultuous heart,
- ‘ Throb audibly. I thus escaped myself !
- ‘ Thankful I stood !—but yet no child was near !

- ‘ Oh what the hopes and fears a mother feels !
- ‘ Her offspring now, in all its innocence
- ‘ And playful gaiety delights the eye,
- ‘ While in her bounding heart, spontaneous rise
- ‘ Sweet feelings ; and she looks around and smiles
- ‘ O’erflowing with delight, as all she saw
- ‘ Were one serene, immeasurable sea

' Of living pleasure ; she extends her eye  
 ' Through distant times, and sees her child arise,  
 ' To fame and worth and greatness, paying well 85  
 ' Parental care,—'till, in one fatal hour,  
 ' Death visits him, and night o'erwhelms the scene !

' Whilst thus I stood, appearing, to myself,  
 ' Of Heaven and earth deserted, through my mind,  
 ' As tho' by power miraculous, I felt, 90  
 ' A sudden and mysterious placidness,  
 ' That made me feel, like some unbodied saint,  
 ' When he looks down upon his earthly friends,  
 ' And marks their sorrow, yet, beholding, knows,  
 ' All, sent in mercy: such I seem'd to feel, 95  
 ' And, tranquil, journey'd on, unknowing where,  
 ' For yet methought there was a God on high.  
 ' Now to the skirts of a dark wood I came.  
 ' 'Twas night ; upon the ground I lay and slept.  
 ' Ere morn appear'd I rose, and travelled on 100  
 ' With vain hope, seeking thee, on whom my heart  
 ' Lean'd as its only stay. The days pass'd by,  
 ' And yet I wander'd. Food I oft obtain'd  
 ' From bush or bramble, but, the craving pang  
 ' Of nature, now increas'd, and the sad thought,  
 ' Seem'd cheering, that my earthly end drew near:  
 ' But then, I thought of thee ! I yet will live,  
 ' Cried I ; Almighty Father, spare my life !'



' Surveying a near valley, I espied,  
 ' What once had been an Abbey, mould'ring now :  
 ' The which I sought, and, desolation, deem'd,  
 ' My best security from wandering Danes.  
 ' I enter'd. Dreary look'd the scene around !  
 ' The Heavens were still, and I could only hear  
 ' The distant night-bird; such the solemn hush,  
 ' All things invested. Now the Moon appear'd,  
 ' As thus I shivering stood, methought I heard  
 ' Footstep approaching ! when I saw a man  
 ' Enter the porch, and stately pass the nich,  
 ' Wherein I stood. I fled ! he followed me 120  
 ' And cried, Who art thou ? say ! I thus replied :  
 ' Pity the wretched !—Art thou one of us ?  
 ' A Saxon ? ' Yes,' the warrior cried, ' I am !  
 ' A servant liege of ALFRED, our good King.  
 ' Who, God be prais'd ! is safe. This gave me joy,  
 ' Such as no words may say. He then inquired,  
 ' Fervent and often, how I thither came ;  
 ' And if, of ALFRED's Queen, I aught had heard,  
 ' For that his King believed that she was dead—  
 ' Murder'd in Glastonbury. I replied, 130  
 ' (Wishing to hide my name, yet meet with thee)  
 ' Some rumour I had heard that yet she lived,  
 ' But that to thee alone, more would I say.  
 ' And as thy face we sought, if e'er I vow'd,  
 ' Earnest, to God, it was from that good hour, 133

- ‘ When next I saw thee, ever, near to dwell,  
 ‘ And part with life, rather than part with thee.’

ALFRED exclaim’d, ‘ And truly didst thou vow !  
 ‘ This is that hour of meeting ! We are hence,  
 ‘ If Heaven approve, never to part ’till death.’ 140  
 A smile of meaning sent from heart to heart,  
 Was the Queen’s answer. When again she spake.

- ‘ Whilst thus I journey’d, fill’d with the high hope  
 ‘ Of seeing thee ; on a near hill, I spied  
 ‘ The Danish army ! Vainly did I plead— 145  
 ‘ Seiz’d was ALSWITHA ! Now must I declare  
 ‘ Something of GUTHRUM ; something of that Dane  
 ‘ Who made me thus a Captive, and ’till now  
 ‘ In bondage held.—

- ‘ One lesson have I learn’d,  
 ‘ Since last I saw thee, ALFRED ! well to know—  
 ‘ That, sometimes ’mid the worst of men, the eye  
 ‘ Fixes on one, who, from some innate cause,  
 ‘ Some secret principle, rises above  
 ‘ The virtues of his station. Hath not Heaven  
 ‘ This mystery appointed, to instruct 155  
 ‘ Poor erring mortals, that within one pale,  
 ‘ All goodness cent’r’d not?—That different tribes  
 ‘ And different faiths contain some excellence

' By little minds unthought of, who would fain,  
 ' Make for themselves, alone, the good sun shine ?  
 ' GUTHRUM the Dane, whose Captive I became,  
 ' Was this superior man ! Tho' nurs'd in wars,  
 ' And with the harden'd, nurtured, him I found  
 ' Firm to his oath ! Inflexible as truth !  
 ' Just to his fancied duties !

' In the Camp, 165

' Following her father, one, his daughter, dwelt ;  
 ' And, wonder, ALFRED ! when to thee I tell,  
 ' How good she was—worthy of such a sire.  
 ' To her I owe full many comforts, hours,  
 ' Of something like contentment, for I talk'd, 170  
 ' To her and GUTHRUM, of th' Eternal Power  
 ' That dwelt on high, who made the glorious sun—  
 ' This wonderous world, and all created things.

' They listen'd to me, and they seem'd to love  
 ' The words I spake : but when I check'd his wrath  
 ' And told of that forgiveness God required  
 ' From man to man, he cried, ' It cannot be !  
 ' Forgiveness didst thou say ? Forgive a foe !  
 ' The injured, pardon ! 'Tis not in man's heart !  
 ' And never will I deem it possible 180  
 ' 'Till for myself I see—that which thou say'st !  
 ' A Christian taught to love and to forgive !

' Pass over wrongs ! and for the evil thing,  
 ' Return the good!—Tell to Credulity  
 ' This tale, I heed it not!' Enough, to say, 183  
 ' I found his mind, fired with wild prejudice,  
 ' Yet true to that small ray of mental light,  
 ' Heaven had vouchsafed. Who thus the same can say,  
 ' Happy is he !

' At Kenwith's massy walls  
 ' We now arrived, where noble ODDUNE lay, 190  
 ' The man, whom next to thee, Danes most abhorr'd.  
 ' I mourn'd his fate.

' There is a tale most sad !  
 ' To this my breast, the thought, such terror brings,  
 ' And will in thine such tumult work, that I,  
 ' Fain would forget it, for myself and thee : 195  
 ' Yet innocence fears nothing but the word  
 ' Spoken in secret !—HUBBA, that foul Dane !  
 ' Beheld ALSWITHA !—More, I cannot say ;  
 ' But, that to GUTHRUM, yonder Dane, thou ow'st,  
 ' That here I stand ! Had he renounced his oath,  
 ' And at most awful threats and solemn prayers,  
 ' Ceas'd his protection—this good friend, she cried,  
 ' (And from her bosom drew a poignard forth)  
 ' Should have preserved mespotless. From that hour,  
 ' My foe was HUBBA, fierce, implacable.

‘ How for my blood he sought, thou know’st.’

The King

Grew pale and trembled. Thus again she spake:

‘ Yes, thank that Dane, who yet survives the fight,  
 ‘ GUTHRUM, for he with that high mind, which shews  
 ‘ The soul’s nobility, exclaim’d, Oh Chief! 205  
 ‘ This heart hath sworn, ’till death itself draw near,  
 ‘ Yon Captive to protect, and, by this sword!  
 ‘ Safe shall she be.

‘ It were a painful task,  
 ‘ To name their boisterous strife. A part thou heard’st!  
 ‘ Often must thou have ponder’d on the thought,  
 ‘ Why Chieftains, like the Danes, should thus forget  
 ‘ Their common cause, and in contentious broils  
 ‘ Spend their best time.—This is that secret, deep!  
 ‘ HUBBA forgot all wrath but wrath for one  
 ‘ Who ne’er offended him. At such an hour,  
 ‘ Thou mettest me, oh ALFRED! and to think,  
 ‘ The pangs that then I felt, but possible,  
 ‘ Me to o’ertake again—chiefly for thee—  
 ‘ Upon my poor distemper’d head would bring  
 ‘ O’erwhelming ruin.

‘ When thou fled’st the Camp,  
 ‘ Strange consternation seized the Danes! They ask’d,

' Earnest for thee, the Harper, and awhile  
 ' Thought thee to air dissolved, and, sudden changed  
 ' To some, thy proper shape ; for they believed,  
 ' Thou wert some deity. When one drew near,  
 ' And said, at dead of night, whilst the wind howl'd,  
 ' Thou passed'st through the gate, to the near shore  
 ' To bathe in Ocean. HUBBA cried aloud  
 ' Truly that man was LOKE, for he hath used  
 ' To change his form, and through the ocean waves  
 ' Dart rapid. From the moment him I saw, 230  
 ' I knew the God !' With this belief they lost  
 ' Thoughts of pursuit, and for the coming fight  
 ' Made ready ; vowing to the gods they served,  
 ' Thy mortal race was short ; approaching death,  
 ' For thee and thine, as was to-morrow's dawn, 235  
 ' Certain. I thought it true ! and felt within,  
 ' Cold as the heart where hope's sun never shines.

' The Danes had vow'd, in solemn rites, to spend  
 ' Nine days for their success ; when IVAR cried,  
 ' Impatient of restraint, panting for war, 240  
 ' What tho' three days of unexpired mirth  
 ' Demand our stay, why should we waste our time ?  
 ' Is not the Saxon King now gathering strength ?  
 ' To-morrow we will hence depart ! Our vows  
 ' Hereafter will we keep, this hour demands 245  
 ' Dependance on our own unconquer'd swords.

' HUBBA exclaim'd, Abhorrent thought ! Forbear  
 ' That impious deed ! Yet, if thou wilt depart,  
 ' Shrink not from slaughter ! glut your swords with  
   blood !  
 ' Nor let one Saxon live to tell the tale           250  
 ' Of that day's battle, when we next shall meet ;  
 ' For by the eternal gods each man shall die !'  
 ' What force was thine I knew not, and I fear'd  
 ' A night of horrors, more intensely dark,  
 ' Than ever yet involved our native land,           255  
 ' Was gathering fast around.

' The Danes now march'd,  
 ' Thee to o'ertake ; and I too follow'd them,  
 ' With GUTHRUM's Daughter, who, in all my cares,  
 ' A sister's interest felt. But more of this—  
 ' Hereafter. To yon castle now we came,           260  
 ' When ; feeling so o'erpower'd my harass'd mind,  
 ' That, I became insensible ; my soul,  
 ' Of past existence, lost all traces, sounds  
 ' Fell from my ear, and to the world around  
 ' Dead I became. How long entranced I sat, 265  
 ' I cannot answer, when, behind, I heard,  
 ' Some voice exclaim, My Queen ! I turn'd and saw  
 ' Brave ODDUNE ! when, in frenzied state, I cried,  
 ' What man art thou ?—

' The rest, thou knowest well.  
 ' That here I stand, Oh God, behold my heart !  
 ' And if it be not grateful, make it such !  
 ' Now, would I speak of thee. For all thy cares,  
 ' Thy dangers and dismays, while yet I bore  
 ' Captivity, sorrow consumed my frame,  
 ' And I forgot myself with fears for thee. 275  
 ' But thou art safe ! Henceforth shalt thou enjoy  
 ' Good days and many ! I will strive to wean  
 ' Thy mind from past misfortunes ! Joy shall now  
 ' Bless thee the more, and thou shalt find sincere—  
 ' ALSWITHA's love—My Husband, and my Lord !'

ALFRED transported rose, and eager cried,  
 ' Best gift of Heaven ! Soother of every care !  
 ' Companion ! Friend ! Instructor ! What so soft  
 ' As the mild tone that from affection springs—  
 ' So lovely, as the human eye, that beams 285  
 ' True tenderness ?—Favor'd of mortal kind,  
 ' Whoe'er thou be, that in this world hast found  
 ' The heart of friendship, give to Heaven thy praise !  
 ' But if that friend, the nearest of all names,  
 ' A Wife's should bear—think thyself bless'd in-  
 deed ! 290  
 ' For thou hast found, 'mid this inclement world,  
 ' A refuge from its storms,—a nobler prize  
 ' Than crowns and diadems !'



ALSWITHA said,

Whilst glimmer'd in her eye, the tear of joy,  
 'Thou hast my gratitude! But, good my Lord!  
 'Pardon the word that might disturb thy mind,  
 'With dreadful recollections. Whilst we stand,  
 'And praise our Maker, for the aid vouchsafed  
 'To us his servants, I would hope, no crime,  
 'Seems it to him, to cast one lingering thought 300  
 'On those, no more! and o'er their memory drop,  
 'Nature's fond tear. Oh ALFRED! thou and I,  
 'Still must remember, with deep agony,  
 'One loss—our Child! that on that fatal day  
 'Made us for ever wretched.' O'er her face 305  
 She cast her hand in silence. When, the King,  
 Rose, and thus spake. 'ALSWITHA! I do fear  
 'To tell thy happiness.' The Queen exclaim'd,  
 'What words were those? Declare! Is my child safe?  
 'Sport not with death!'

ALFRED replied, 'He is!

'Thy child is safe! After a moment's pause,  
 ALSWITHA calmly said, 'This can I bear!  
 'Great sorrows, and great joys alike are link'd  
 'To dreaminess!' The flood of feeling came!  
 Earnest she cried. 'Is my child safe! Oh God!  
 'Father of Heaven and Earth—spare my weak head!  
 'Drive me not crazy through the earth! Allay

‘ This throbbing of my bosom! Didst thou say  
 ‘ My child was safe? Where is he? Bring him to me!  
 ‘ Thou tent disclose him!’

ALFRED said, ‘ Belov’d,

‘ Oh stay thy anguish! check the vehemence  
 ‘ Of these thy warm affections! Soon, full soon,  
 ‘ Thou shalt behold thy child! thou shalt embrace,  
 ‘ Upon the coming day, thy darling boy!—  
 ‘ He hastens from a lowly dwelling near.’ 325

By transport overpower’d, the Queen awhile,  
 Stood silent. When the King to ODDUNE spake.  
 ‘ This wonderoustale—ALSWITHA’s, thou hast heard,  
 ‘ And doubtless didst anticipate the words  
 ‘ Which now I speak. GUTHRUM, the Danish Chief,  
 ‘ Hence, is my friend! Haste to the castle, say,  
 ‘ He needs not dread thy Monarch! With apt words;  
 ‘ Root out his many fears! and let him know,  
 ‘ I am not wrathful.’ When ALSWITHA cried:

‘ Chieftain! one thing I ask. Inquire for her—  
 ‘ GUTHRUM’s fair daughter. This my heart doth  
     yearn  
 ‘ To shew the Damsel kindness.’ ODDUNE heard,  
 And, bending, left the presence of the King.

END OF BOOK XXI.

## ALFRED. BOOK XXII.

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 ARGUMENT.

*ODDUNE again visits Guthrum and persuades him to submit to Alfred, He consents to see the King; Alfred receives him at first with assumed anger; Alswitha pleads for Guthrum, who is pardoned; Guthrum-intreats to become a Christian, and ascribes his conversion to Alswitha; he deplores the supposed death of his daughter; she presents herself to him. The Danish Chief and his daughter depart to the Castle. Oddune commended by Alswitha:*

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**O**DDUNE renew'd his visit to the Dane;  
 And as the castle hall he enter'd, stern,  
 GUTHRUM approach'd and cried, 'Thou busy foe!  
 'What seek'st thou now? May we not perish here,  
 'Safe from thy visits, and at least enjoy,  
 'Peace in our final moments? Haste thou back!  
 'I hate thy converse! 'Tis to me more foul  
 'Than screams to drowsiness! Proud Saxon! Life—  
 'We know its limits! and, that soon these eyes  
 'Closed will be found! yet think not thou to gain  
 'On easy-terms this castle! We are Danes!

' And 'till the hungry crows look down upon us,  
 ' And think us food for them, so thin and wan,  
 ' As on the walls we lie, gazing on ye  
 ' Our weak assailants, never shall you tread      20  
 ' This spot triumphant.'

ODDUNE cried, ' Forbear !

' I come not now with threats but promises ;  
 ' In patience, hear my words !'

The Dane exclaim'd,

' I hear thee not! Would'st thou attempt to sooth  
 ' The Bear with promises, when he beheld      25  
 ' The Hunters round him? Neither talk with me!  
 ' My path is plain! Death will anon be ours!  
 ' But, 'till it come, we will aspire to live  
 ' Worthy of death, and to deserve the joys  
 ' That wait the valiant.'

ODDUNE cried again;      30

' I do not bring thee death, but rather life—  
 ' For thee and thine. These are the words I bear.—  
 ' Submit to ALFRED! on his mercy lean!  
 ' For he is one who harbours not revenge  
 ' And hate remorseless. Trust his clemency,      35  
 ' And thou shalt find thy apprehensions vain,  
 ' Thy fears ungrounded.'

Said the wrathful Dane.

- ‘Thou seest me thus thy prey, but do not add
- ‘Insult, where courage may not shew itself!
- ‘Dost thou suspect of fear? I know it not!— 40
- ‘And did’st thou think this heart, mercy would sue
- ‘From England’s Monarch? Never shall the sun
- ‘See GUTHRUM crouch before the victor’s frown
- ‘And ask him, pardon!’

ODDUNE cried, ‘Thy doubts,

- ‘Thy apprehensions, call them what thou wilt, 45
- ‘Are most unfounded! ALFRED boasts a heart
- ‘That never felt contempt for any man!
- ‘Approach our King and he will grant thee life.’

The Dane replied, ‘Would’st thou, by one asleep,

- ‘Believe the soft breeze heeded? Nor to me 50
- ‘Talk thou of asking life! It is a gift
- ‘I prize not, and would rather spurn than keep;
- ‘My child is slain! my honor flown! and now
- ‘Wherefore should I, a Dane, desire to live?’

ODDUNE replied, ‘Let not ideal mists 55

- ‘Before thee float; and Prejudice, that great!
- ‘That mightier mist than all—Quenching the mind!
- ‘Thou lovest not thy life! and fain would’st boast
- ‘Of yielding the small boon, unterrified;—

H

' Prized but by cowards! Let me ask thee, Dane!  
 ' Not thy proud heart, but that which seldom errs,  
 ' Thy quiet feelings, why thou lovest death?

' Is it some little thing to breathe the air—  
 ' To see the light of Heaven—the glorious sun—  
 ' The azure firmament?—this beauteous world 65  
 ' Of comforts and of wonders infinite?  
 ' Is it some little thing, at early morn,  
 ' To feel the freshness of the gale, that comes  
 ' Replenish'd with its vivifying powers?—  
 ' A senseless joy, an idle benefit, 70  
 ' To wander in the balmy summer morn,  
 ' Through fields and flowers, drinking the vital air,  
 ' With fragrance and with odoriferous scents  
 ' O'erflowing, rousing up the soul to dreams  
 ' Of immaterial joy, and dim regards, 75  
 ' Of a sweet something, undefined, yet clear  
 ' In the soul's confidence—sometime to come?  
 ' And is it nothing deem'd, to taste the grape,  
 ' Nature's sweet bev'rage!—or, the cheering mead?  
 ' Nothing to view the fruits that charm the eye,  
 ' And please the taste—scatter'd through every clime,  
 ' All nations blessing!

' Were our ears bestow'd  
 ' To feed disgust, and in our minds excite

- ‘ Perpetual jarrings? Can we wander forth  
 ‘ And hear the wild-wood music—birds and things,  
 ‘ Yielding their minstrelsy, in soothing notes  
 ‘ Or soul-inspiring, and all harmony  
 ‘ To the tuned spirit? Can we scorn, what springs  
 ‘ From silent melody—from the sweet tongues  
 ‘ Of leaf, and branch and flower, all choristers 90  
 ‘ Sounding their Maker’s praise? Can this our world—  
 ‘ Its wonders infinite, no joyance yield?—  
 ‘ No comfort? and no promise give the soul  
 ‘ That should delay its wanderings, and inspire  
 ‘ One wish to linger ’mid a scene so fair?— 95  
 ‘ And is there nothing in that foe to man,  
 ‘ Death! that affrights thee? Canst thou think unmov’d,  
 ‘ That this thy frame, shortly beneath the ground  
 ‘ Will moulder slow? That these thy comely limbs  
 ‘ Which now support the fabric, thou hast long  
 ‘ Pamper’d and call’d thyself, will soon supply  
 ‘ The earth-worm’s banquet? Yields it no dismay—  
 ‘ No creeping of the flesh, to think that these  
 ‘ Soon must relax, and all which once was thee,  
 ‘ Sink in the grave’s long quiet? Rouse thyself!  
 ‘ Let me conduct thee hence! In ALFRED trust!  
 ‘ Here death must meet thee—there is safety found.”

GUTHRUM replied, ‘ Myself, I thought I knew,  
 ‘ And my resolves could trust; but, these thy words,

' Probe deep my heart, and to my view display 110  
 ' Thoughts veil'd before. I never yet have fear'd  
 ' Death in his fiercest garb ; but through my mind  
 ' A secret dread now passes : these thy words  
 ' Have dimm'd my understanding, so unhing'd  
 ' For calm decision, and I seem to wish 115  
 ' Longer to live. But, hear I not a voice ?—  
 ' Honor's !—his look is stern ! his law severe !  
 ' How shall I sooth him ?' To whom, thus the Chief :

' Brave Dane ! true honor lies not with the man  
 ' Who scorns all dangers, and would rather tear  
 ' His heart asunder, and to savage beasts  
 ' Cast it, than own the influence of fate  
 ' Which governs all men. Thou hast bravely fought !  
 ' Now, bravely suffer ! not by scorning life  
 ' With rude and brutal rage, but, by the faith 125  
 ' Thou placest in another, which best shews  
 ' What might be placed in thee. ALFRED our King,  
 ' No unforgiven injury e'er hath felt.  
 ' Trust him, and live ! His worth thou knowest not,  
 ' And how he prizes valour such as thine.' 130

' Talk not of pardon !' GUTHRUM cried. ' Whoe'er  
 ' Pardon'd such wrongs as his ? Vain thought, away !  
 ' It cannot be !—I think it cannot be—  
 ' It cannot be ! yet, the experiment



' Were easy ;—Father of the slain ! forbear      135  
 ' That angry look ! Where are my senses flown ?  
 ' Thy words, and her's, whom gods preserve ! so hide,  
 ' And so confound all former thoughts, that I—  
 ' Stagger and wish to live.—

' What thou hast said  
 ' Of ALFRED's clemency shall now be tried ;      140  
 ' But, if it fail—the penalty ? Away !  
 ' I will attend thee ! Chieftain, point the way !  
 ' By the first look of ALFRED, I may judge  
 ' Of these thy words—whether I live or die.  
 ' Now will I seek the Danish troops, and name  
 ' GUTHRUM's design.'

To whom he thus began.

' Danes ! here we stand, cut off from aid, and doom'd  
 ' To perish in this sad and evil hour—  
 ' Both you and me. Not dying as we ought,  
 ' In battle, why should death so charm our hearts—  
 ' So blind our eyes to all that cheers the soul  
 ' And animates ? If honor we can save  
 ' And save our lives, is it not well ? For what,  
 ' Is there in death, that living man should seek ?  
 ' If in the past fight breathless we had lain,      155  
 ' There had been hope, but now within these walls,  
 ' To perish has no charm for me, if, well,

‘ Life can be kept with honor.

‘ Britain’s King

‘ Hath sent yon Chieftain hither, to demand  
 ‘ Submission, and hath promis’d well and true 160  
 ‘ To grant forgiveness. To my mind it seems  
 ‘ Impossible for one so wrong’d, to seek  
 ‘ Ought but our blood ; this Saxon tells me nay ;  
 ‘ And speaks, full confident, that if we yield  
 ‘ These arms, and stoop to one—our bravest foe !  
 ‘ We yet may live.

‘ I will alone repair

‘ To yonder camp, and, with the Saxon King,  
 ‘ Treat for your safety.—Venturous the design !  
 ‘ If I return not with convenient speed  
 ‘ You may conclude me dead ! As Danes, then stand  
 ‘ Firm to your posts, and if you all must die—  
 ‘ Die like yourselves ! GUTHRUM, unterrified  
 ‘ Leaves you to make this perilous attempt.’

He said, whilst words of dubious import came  
 From those around him, not of joy or hope, 175  
 But from despair, that still had consciousness  
 Of its own state, to know that ’twas despair.

The Chieftain now, with ODDUNE, readily,

Pass'd through the archway, whilst all mark'd them sad,  
 Tho' not a tongue was heard, nor sound, save one—  
 The rustling wind, that 'mid the turrets moan'd,  
 Making each heart sick with its hollow voice.

Whilst journeying on, to GUTHRUM, ODDUNE thus:  
 ' Had'st thou not once, good Dane! a daughter,—one  
 ' Known to thy female captive? ' I had *once*!'   
 Answered the Dane, ' now pray thee, ask no more!  
 ' Upon my wrongs, I think, words suit not me.'

And now they reach'd the Saxon Camp, when thus  
 ODDUNE address'd the Dane. ' I, first, will seek  
 ' ALFRED, then lead thee to his presence, near.'  
 ODDUNE then sought his Monarch's tent, where sat  
 The King and Queen, with one—a Damsel fair.  
 When ALFRED cried, ' Good ODDUNE instant say,  
 ' Where is brave GUTHRUM, have thy words prevail'd  
 ' To draw him hither?'

ODDUNE cried, ' They have!  
 ' The warrior waits!' When ALFRED rose and said,  
 ' Since thou departed'st to the neighbouring fort,  
 ' Within our camp, yon maiden hath arrived—  
 ' GUTHRUM's fair daughter. As to meet our force  
 ' The Danes proceeded, from her safe abode 200  
 ' She ventured, by affection urged, to mark

' How fared her father. When the battle ceased,  
 ' She with the routed army fled, nor where,  
 ' Heeding, her thoughts were wild: our forces met,  
 ' And here conducted her. Behold her now 205  
 ' Loved by the Queen, whom she so oft hath served!  
 When turning to **ALSWITHA**, thus he spake:

' Take now thy diadem! assume the robe,  
 ' Beseeming royalty, the same will I;  
 ' And let the Danish maiden screen herself. 210  
 ' **ODDUNE**, conceal our thoughts! when this is done,  
 ' Let **GURHRUM** enter.'

Now the royal pair  
 Sat in due state; when **ODDUNE** left the tent,  
 And soon return'd—leading the ancient Dane.  
 When first he enter'd, **ALFRED** cried, ' Oh man!  
 ' What thinkest thou the punishment deserved  
 ' For crimes like thine.' These words, **GUTHRUM**  
     confirmed  
 In dreadful expectations. He replied,  
 ' No punishment! My crime is that alone  
 ' Of soldier vanquished! This may death procure,  
 ' But that no Dane regards as punishment.'

**ALFRED** exclaimed, ' Proud man, approach the  
     King

‘ Whom thou hast injured!—

GUTHRUM nearer came,  
 When ALFRED thus: ‘ Thy triumph now is o’er!  
 ‘ Thy power is flown! yet let me hear thee say,  
 ‘ Wilt thou become my subject? Wilt thou own  
 ‘ Me, thy liege Lord?’ ‘ Never!’ replied the Dane.  
 ‘ Within thine eye I see deep vengeance sit,  
 ‘ And wrath that seals my ruin! Let me die!  
 ‘ Instant, I dread it not! nor fear the blow      230  
 ‘ That makes me free for ever. Take my life!’  
 Eager he cried. ‘ One blow, and I am past  
 ‘ Thy hatred and my own consuming shame.’

He said, and, drawing near the King, held out  
 His naked breast. When, looking up, he knew  
 The HARPER’S visage! Sudden dropt his arm!  
 His cheek from crimson to a deadly white—  
 Turn’d and he shiver’d. Every tongue was mute,  
 And every eye fix’d on the wondering Dane.  
 When GUTHRUM thus exclaim’d—Looking so wild,  
 That madness seeing him, again might start  
 Itself to reason.—

‘ Certain, now is death!  
 ‘ Each moment is new torment! To survive  
 ‘ Blasts my last hope!’

‘Thou shalt not die!’ exclaim’d  
 The Queen, and, hastening from her seat, appear’d  
 Before the trembling Dane. ‘Thou shalt not die!’  
 She cried, ‘for I am grateful, thou art good,  
 ‘And shalt be happy.’ At these words the Dane  
 Look’d up and saw—his CAPTIVE! Wilder still  
 Roll’d his full eyes! confused conceptions rose—  
 Madd’ning his soul. When GUTHRUM thus exclaim’d:

‘ODIN! are these thy halls? Where is the mead?  
 ‘Where are my laughing Brethren? Where the souls,  
 ‘Ordain’d to teach me holy mysteries?  
 ‘Where are the Danes who in the past fight fell,  
 ‘And rush’d to join thee? Am I here, alone?  
 ‘No eye but mine! What mean these visions? Gods?  
 ‘Have ye no feeling for the aged GUTHRUM?  
 ‘Where are ye? Who art thou?’ he said and look’d  
 Fierce on ALSWITHA.

‘I am she,’ she cried, 260  
 ‘Truly thy Captive, whom thou oft hast saved  
 ‘When death drew near, and I will now, my hand  
 ‘Stretch out for thee! Pardon this Dane, oh King!  
 ‘A nobler and more estimable man  
 ‘Lives not to share thy favor!’ ALFRED heard,  
 And drawing near the wondering Dane, exclaim’d,  
 ‘GUTHRUM! accept thy life, and with it, too,

‘ Brave man! my gratitude.’

Still, look'd the Dane,  
With wistful eye ; unknowing, if the things  
Were real, or, the baseless phantasies 270  
That float before the mind, at the dim hour  
When dreams perplex it.—Round the tent again,  
He look'd to satisfy his doubting mind:  
Then at the King, the Queen. When ALFRED spake:

‘ Chieftain, dismiss thy doubts! No fancied scene  
‘ Is this before thee. Thou art yet on earth!  
‘ And I am ALFRED! I the Harper am,  
‘ Whose harp thou saved'st in the Danish camp:  
‘ Nor doubt thy sight! for this is really her—  
‘ Thy Captive!—Britain's Queen! who, but for thee,  
‘ Now in the dust had lain, and I been found—  
‘ A lonely, friendless, miserable man!  
‘ I know thy character! I know thy heart!  
‘ And prize thee, but hereafter hope to prize,  
‘ Doubly, when better known. Behold in me, 185  
‘ Thy true and constant friend!’

‘ This is too much!’

GUTHRUM exclaim'd. ‘ Man's mind was never form'd  
‘ To bear such conflicts! Didst thou say forgive?  
‘ Call me thy friend? say life was mine? Nor yet,

‘ I cannot trust my senses! Is it so?’

290

‘ Yes!’ answer’d ALFRED ; ‘ Yes ! I tell thee yes !  
 ‘ Thou art forgiven ! Thou art ALFRED’s friend !  
 ‘ Now, of me, ask some favour ! Be it great !  
 ‘ Thou need’st not fear its magnitude ! Declare !  
 ‘ And I will teach thee, what thou hast to hope  
 ‘ In after times, by the reply I make.’

Cried GUTHRUM, with surpassing majesty,  
 ‘ This be the favour, which alone I ask!—  
 ‘ The greatest, and most holily desired !  
 ‘ Let me partake thy Faith ! Let me receive, 300  
 ‘ The name of Christian, and embrace, like thee,  
 ‘ That true religion, which can dictate thus,  
 ‘ And thus perform. Let me renounce,’ he cried,  
 ‘ That faith which I too long have call’d my own !  
 ‘ Which, not like thine, conducts to peace and love,  
 ‘ And kindly intercourse, but, wrath and blood,  
 ‘ And discords horrible.

‘ To her, thy Queen,  
 ‘ Who stands beside thee, I this feeling owe !  
 ‘ Her words, ere now, have roused my dawning soul  
 ‘ To things immortal—scenes invisible— 310  
 ‘ Piercing my spirit. Of her words I thought,  
 ‘ And seem’d to feel some kindred sympathies—



' The approving voice within; but when she spake  
 ' That Christians could forgive the bitterest foe,  
 ' And love requite for hatred; this I cried, 315  
 ' Can never be! yours are the sounding words  
 ' That have no meaning, but, I now have found,  
 ' Christians can pardon!—Thou hast pardon'd me!'

ALFRED with rapture answer'd, ' This is joy,  
 ' Not of earth's kind! to find a man, like thee,  
 ' Whom I so honor! by that Power divine  
 ' Who governs all things, call'd to the true faith.  
 ' But what exalts my joy, is, that this change,  
 ' Under High Heaven, hath reach'd thee from a source,  
 ' I little thought of—from my captived Queen! 325  
 ' Dear to my heart's best feelings! dearer far  
 ' Than all earth's treasures! next to God preferr'd,  
 ' And the great duties of my regal birth.  
 ' Who now shall question Providence? who doubt,  
 ' That He who this stupendous fabric rear'd 330  
 ' Upholds and governs it? Hence have I learn'd,  
 ' Never to unlearn! that the man who trusts  
 ' Omnipotence, shall in the end perceive,  
 ' All things were right.'

ALSWITHA thus replied,  
 ' Such is *my* faith! May we indulge the hope,  
 ' That GUTHRUM, who, ere this, true worth possess'd

' And half the Christian's graces, now may shine,  
 ' With cloudless light, honor'd and loved by all.—  
 ' One question may I ask thee? GUTHRUM! say!  
 ' Where is thy Daughter? Where is she I loved?  
 ' That noble maiden, who so many hours  
 ' Of comfort gave, when'all the world to me  
 ' Seem'd blank and dead? Now shall this heart display,  
 ' The gratitude I once could but express.—  
 ' Thou speakest not!'

GUTHRUM, distracted, cried,  
 ' Spare me that thought!' Within his heart there  
 seem'd  
 Hard conflicts. 'I am sad!' he said. 'A loss  
 ' Hath fall'n upon me—very hard to bear!—  
 ' In the past fight—my daughter fell, and now—  
 ' I am most wretched!—Duteous was my child  
 ' As ever father had! a loving child!—  
 ' I could have welcom'd death, her to have saved!  
 ' My child!—my comfort! never more shall I  
 ' Behold thee, oh my daughter! Thou art gone!—  
 ' I am a poor and desolate old man, 355.  
 ' Bereaved of all things!'

As he stood and paused,  
 Swift from her hiding place, his daughter sprang,  
 And cried, 'My father! I am yet alive!'

The startled sire exclaim'd, ' Impossible !  
 ' *My daughter* ?—Yes thou art! O God of Heaven,  
 ' Let me not die!' Upon her neck he fell,  
 And each in silence soothed the throbbing heart,  
 And dropt the mutual tear—unspeakable,  
 Of worth and meaning!

ALFRED them address'd,

' I share your transport! Long may you enjoy  
 ' The happiness you both so well deserve!—  
 ' GUTHRUM, my friend, attend! The hour is late.  
 ' Befits thee now to seek thy castle, near,  
 ' And to the Danes, declare my purpose; say,  
 ' For GUTHRUM's sake, I will forgive all wrongs,  
 ' And grant free pardon! Tell them to confide,  
 ' In Britain's King! And if with thee they chuse  
 ' To own my sway, and live beneath my crown,  
 ' I will receive them! they shall be with us  
 ' One people, whom, to serve and to protect, 375  
 ' Shall be my fervent wish, my constant care.

' Tell them, the fleet, that to these shores convey'd  
 ' IVAR their Chief, and all his followers' wives,  
 ' Not wholly is consumed; each woman lives,  
 ' By me protected! If they here remain, 380  
 ' Soon shall they meet, and form one family  
 ' With us their friends. But if they rather seek,

' With thee, their native land,—safe shall they go !  
 ' But there is one thing more of which to speak.  
 ' Return thou for the night with this thy child !  
 ' Be here to-morrow ! Thou hast yet to share  
 ' A holy rite, baptism ; known of all  
 ' Who truly form Christ's kingdom militant.'

GUTHRUM replied. ' Most earnestly I seek  
 ' This proof of my conviction and full faith 390  
 ' In Christ my Saviour ! On the coming morn,  
 ' Thou shalt behold me here !' This said, the Dane  
 Straight with his daughter left the Saxon tent.

To ODDUNE then, ALFRED his words address'd:  
 ' Chieftain I prize thee, and would fain behold 395  
 ' All happiness attend thee, but, what joy  
 ' Can solitude afford ? Society,  
 ' The smiles of her we love, the endearing wife,  
 ' The hopeful offspring ; these the charms of earth,  
 ' These give a zest to all things here below, 400  
 ' And *all* beside possessing, but declares  
 ' How sad the lot of him who cannot boast  
 ' These soul-enchanting treasures. May I say,  
 ' If beauty can attract, affection charm,  
 ' Or constancy delight thee—gallant Chief, 405  
 ' Think of yon Damsel !'

ODDUNE thus replied :

' GUTHRUM's fair daughter, who shall not admire ?  
 ' Her charms I own, her virtues I revere ;  
 ' But, never must I strive by word or deed  
 ' To win the Damsel's love. Her I respect, 410  
 ' But, more I cannot. To another Maid  
 ' My vows are plighted ; and I trust, ere long,  
 ' To taste domestic joys, and emulate  
 ' The virtues of my great and noble King.'

ALSWITHA cried, ' Brave man ! Thou hast a soul  
 ' Which all should reverence, all should imitate.—  
 ' The flower of British youth for her shall strive,  
 ' Yet never one more worthy than thyself ;  
 ' ODDUNE, I like thy frank and manly speech !  
 ' There is a race, worthless, and lost to shame,  
 ' Who rove from Fair to Fair, all Maids alike,  
 ' Deck'd with gay smiles, and courteous in all deeds,  
 ' Boasting of Conquests. On their tongues are found  
 ' Maxims of worth and true humanity ;  
 ' And they can loudly talk of right and wrong, 425  
 ' Of honor, and injustice, and true love,  
 ' Repeated oft with meanings light as air.  
 ' Such of eternal constancy will vow,  
 ' Or, at reserved affection humbly glance,  
 ' Or, less presuming, tho' of equal force, 430  
 ' Speak only with the language of the eye :  
 ' And thus, with low and base hypocrisy,

- ‘ Winding false way to woman’s gentle heart.
- ‘ These shadows of true men, might dread the thought
- ‘ To tarnish female honor, but would smile      435
- ‘ To murder female peace, and, unconcern’d—
- ‘ Nay, with self compliments and secret pride,
- ‘ See grief corrode the cheek of Innocence—
- ‘ Behold the wreck of that Maid’s happiness,
- ‘ Whose only fault was unrequited love.      440
- ‘ Such is not ODDUNE!    Thou a soldier art
- ‘ In name and spirit.    May thy sex like thee,
- ‘ Protect, not wound, the fond and guileless hearts
- ‘ Of Albion’s Beauteous Daughters.’

ODDUNE bow’d,    445

Graceful, to earth, and from the tent retired.

END OF BOOK XXII.

## ALFRED. BOOK XXIII.

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 ARGUMENT.

*THE Vision of the Guardian Angel.*


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**W**HILST ALFRED, in his tent, at midnight slept,  
 He saw, or thought he saw, a Spirit, tall,  
 And of majestic port. His eye was mild,  
 Yet one fix'd look he had, as tho' he stood,  
 Immoveable, from ages infinite, 5  
 That came not, but appear'd. Like some huge crag  
 Of marble, towering high, all white, whose head  
 The winter storms have beaten, and the winds,  
 Wrathful, assail'd ;—yet still it looks the same.—  
 Through time, in all its revolutions, bears 10  
 The same eternal aspect ; white and still.

The Monarch trembled, as distinct he view'd  
 Th' unearthly form, whose raiment shone with rays  
 Effulgent, self-created, diamond-like,  
 Making the darkness day, and o'er the tent 15

Casting celestial splendors. ALFRED, long,  
 Endured the terrors expectation brings ;  
 When in a slow and solemn tone he cried,  
 ' Spirit ! what seek'st thou ? ' 'Till the sound had  
       ceased  
 And each vibration ended, that might check      20  
 Communion, immaterial, all was still ;  
 When, thus the Spirit answer'd :

' I am one

' Of the innumerable host, who throng  
 ' This lower world, Communicants of good ;  
 ' I am thy GUARDIAN ANGEL ! From the hour  
 ' This world received thee, I have been thy friend,  
 ' And ever near, commissioned by high Heaven  
 ' To screen thee from the powers that roam abroad,  
 ' Hostile to human kind. Me, God hath sent  
 ' To tell thee of his wonderous ways, and name    30  
 ' Immortal truths, such as shall cheer thy mind,  
 ' Hereafter, in the great and trying scenes  
 ' That lie before thee : for, prosperity,  
 ' Tho' all desire to have—few well can bear.  
 ' Thou art appointed to great good ! thy reign,    35  
 ' Thy matchless deeds, shall to succeeding times  
 ' Shine forth resplendent, and example prove  
 ' To distant ages. I am chiefly sent,  
 ' Thee to instruct, in truths, needful to know.



‘ In thy high station, yet, if thou require      40  
 ‘ Knowledge of other sort, I may declare,  
 ‘ Tho’ brief;—for thou hast in Jehovah’s sight  
 ‘ Found favour.

‘ Whilst confined to this low earth,  
 ‘ And fluttering far and wide, busied with cares,  
 ‘ The heart consuming, listening to the voice      45  
 ‘ Of many tempters, loud, importunate,  
 ‘ All is a dream ! The man who wealth pursues,  
 ‘ Toiling both night and morn, with earnest brow,  
 ‘ Counting his gains, and on his future joys  
 ‘ Dwelling enraptured, little thinks how near      50  
 ‘ That Foe may be, which blasts the rich man’s all !  
 ‘ And whosoe’er, as the chief good, pursues  
 ‘ Fantastic Pleasure, pierces his heart through,  
 ‘ And only dreams. So he who covets fame,  
 ‘ The tinkling sound that on the breeze is heard,  
 ‘ Then dies away, shapes insubstantial forms  
 ‘ In tissue gay, and sighs to find at last  
 ‘ Shadows, unreal :—Wisdom knew them such !  
 ‘ All from their dreams awake ! If in this world ;  
 ‘ Happy ! thrice happy they !

‘ Yet one there is, 60  
 ‘ Wandering awhile below, who does not dream,—  
 ‘ The Christian ! He, amid a dreaming world,

' With eye, wide open, darts his filmless gaze  
 ' Through nature, and with joy beholds it all,  
 ' And calls it very good: in all things sees 65  
 ' His Father's hand, his Maker, his true Friend,  
 ' And blesses it, and with the Holy Spirit  
 ' Holds commune.

' This, that great reality,  
 ' Mortals alone can know ;—to feel and taste,  
 ' 'Mid an uncertain world, the true delight, 70  
 ' Hope brings, supported by that confidence,  
 ' Which, of his natural strength, man cannot gain,  
 ' It is the gift of Heaven! Yet he who hopes,  
 ' Who earnestly implores, who humbly waits,  
 ' Who views in sin, the first great foe of man, 75  
 ' Who prizes holiness, who feels his heart  
 ' Constrain'd to love his Saviour and his God ;—  
 ' He, tho' awhile oppress'd by doubts and fears,  
 ' Shall in due time receive that precious gift,  
 ' And, 'mid a jarring and tempestuous world, 80  
 ' Walk full of light and peace.

' Of the vast whole,  
 ' This universe, and all created things,  
 ' Man glimpses but an atom! all the rest  
 ' Is hidden in thick darkness, so to be  
 ' 'Till borne beyond the grave! when, all shall prove

' One perfect harmony ! The doubtful points  
 ' In man's existence, that once pierced his mind,  
 ' And made him sorrowful, shall then appear  
 ' No sport of chance, but, order'd by that Power  
 ' Who never err'd. And tho' thou oft may'st mourn,  
 ' Evils thou canst not cure, and see th' event  
 ' Other than thou designedst, to the heart  
 ' God only looks. Grieve not where grief is vain !  
 ' But yield to higher wisdom than thy own,  
 ' And, as befitteth mortal, patiently 95  
 ' Endure in silence.

' Not in th' Eternal's eye  
 ' Is the same deed by different men perform'd !  
 ' Motives and principles to Him appear,  
 ' Clear, tho' conceal'd from human scrutiny ;  
 ' And some who bore high titles and great names  
 ' For many virtues, 'mid their fellow men,—  
 ' Will soon be found, clothed in their proper shape,  
 ' Their true deformity ; whilst others, named,  
 ' The weak ! the vile ! in Heaven's eternal scroll  
 ' Foremost will stand ! From this learn charity,—  
 ' Judgment is God's alone. Th' anathema,  
 ' Man ill becometh, or the scornful tongue  
 ' That to a weaker brother would exclaim,  
 ' While lifting the high look, ' Approach me not !  
 ' I am more holy.'

' Strive to enter thou 110  
 ' At the strait gate, and for a fallen world  
 ' Pray fervently! Th' effectual fervent prayer!  
 ' For, to desire another's benefit,  
 ' Tho' that desire be vain, brings on the heart,  
 ' Thus teeming with celestial charities, 115  
 ' A rich return. Yes, evermore indulge  
 ' Th' ecstatic hope, that yet the time may come  
 ' When God, in goodness infinite, shall own  
 ' Justice appeased, and bid all Nature smile!  
 ' Then would th' eternal Jubilee commence, 120  
 ' Rending with shouts Heaven's adamantine gates,  
 ' And starry thrones!—But these are lofty themes!  
 ' Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

' Flee thou the monster, Pride. He robs the heart  
 ' Of comforts numberless, involving oft 125  
 ' In storms and tempests; driving Peace afar—  
 ' The blessing which the wise man values most.  
 ' Humility! fairest of mortal garbs,  
 ' And beautiful as morning! hold it dear!—  
 ' It is a heavenly ornament! Be thou  
 ' Gentle of spirit, ready to be taught, 130  
 ' Seeing thy frailty: so shalt thou receive  
 ' Knowledge to cheer thee, wisdom to direct,  
 ' And all things needful.

' Yet, be thou aware!

' Man's mind the full effulgence of all light  
 ' May not endure ; therefore, be still, nor strive  
 ' To lift the veil, Heaven hath seen fit to cast  
 ' O'er many things, and in profoundest shades  
 ' Hidden from mortal sight. One thing is clear !  
 ' God is all good, all great.

' Believing this,

' Dive not in that unfathomable gulf, 140  
 ' Conjecture vague, but with the little light,  
 ' Certain, thou hast, rest satisfied ; for more,  
 ' Seeking to know, will but with pangs torment,  
 ' And, in the end, make thee forget what is  
 ' To guess what may be. Soon the time will come,  
 ' For most, too soon ! when each mysterious thing  
 ' Shall be made clear, and to th' assembled worlds  
 ' God's ways to man be justified, and all,  
 ' Cry, ' Holy, Holy, Lord of Heaven and Earth !'

' Thou hast endured, 'till now, a load of cares,  
 ' Such as have wrung thy heart, and in the hour  
 ' When faithless doubts arose, made thee suspect  
 ' That, 'mid this world, thou wert ordain'd to roam  
 ' A friendless and a solitary thing,  
 ' Uncertain whence, and, whither bound, unknown,  
 ' A blank in the creation. Cease to mourn !  
 ' Henceforth when sorrows overwhelm, believe,

- ‘ They spring from that benignant Power who seeks
- ‘ By every little evil—one effect—
- ‘ His creatures’ benefit—to raise their hearts      160
- ‘ From sin to purity, from Earth to Heaven.
- ‘ How different man’s from the Almighty’s view !
- ‘ God often sees prosperity, or pride,
- ‘ Or unbelief, or that disastrous foe—
- ‘ Indiff’rence—offspring of Iniquity !      165
- ‘ Those whom he loves o’ertake, and lest the flood
- ‘ Should drown their spirits, bear them far away
- ‘ From holiness and healing sympathies,
- ‘ Angels, like me, become His ministers,
- ‘ And bear some needful antidote—Disease—      170
- ‘ Anguish of spirit, or the dread decree
- ‘ Which strips them of the baser dross of earth—
- ‘ To give them an eternal heritage.

- ‘ Yet for thy comfort, more may I declare.
- ‘ Such are the joys, in the hereafter world,      175
- ‘ Which wait the righteous, that, one transient view,
- ‘ One faint perception of the weight of glory,
- ‘ Might, from its base, the mind, hurl, and unfit
- ‘ For mortal exercise, raising such hopes,
- ‘ Such strong desires, such longings to depart,      180
- ‘ And mix with the celestial choir, who shout
- ‘ Praises to God, forming one concourse vast
- ‘ Of all the Righteous—Patriarchs and Saints,

- ‘ Prophets, Apostles, and those holy men,  
 ‘ The lights of every age,—the salt of earth— 185  
 ‘ The sons of God, redeemed and sanctified,  
 ‘ That all the little round of mortal things  
 ‘ Needful to life, and fitting us as men,  
 ‘ Would fade away, nor longer interest, one,  
 ‘ So soon to leave them, and participate 190  
 ‘ In joys eternal; therefore wisely veil’d!  
 ‘ Save when the dying man, the Christian, looks  
 ‘ Beyond this lower world, glimpsing that bliss,  
 ‘ The unfading crown that waits him, and the cloud,  
 ‘ Bearing Arch-angels, from whose giddy height,  
 ‘ They look with open arms, and beckoning cry—  
 ‘ Approach, bless’d Spirit!’ He may half conceive  
 ‘ Heaven’s weight of bliss. And whilst the good  
     man’s speech  
 ‘ (When on the verge of the eternal world)  
 ‘ Sounds incoherent, wild; to us, around, 200  
 ‘ Attendant angels, other thoughts arise!  
 ‘ We hear the broken word, the silent prayer;  
 ‘ We mark the look of agonizing joy,  
 ‘ When the first beam of immaterial light  
 ‘ Darts through the mind, and to the countenance  
 ‘ Gives heavenly radiance. In the future world,  
 ‘ Whereto you haste, tho’ filled with unknown forms,  
 ‘ Once inconceivable; tho’ long the eye,  
 ‘ Cleans’d from earth’s prejudice, shall view around

‘ Innumerable things, all wonderful!                      210  
 ‘ Yet, like the scar’d bird hovering round its nest,  
 ‘ It shall delight to view its former state,  
 ‘ Dwelling on faded scenes.    Whilst gifted thus  
 ‘ To see all nature, and behold her page  
 ‘ Open before their eyes, what most will rouse    215  
 ‘ Astonishment, (leaving eternal things,)  
 ‘ Is this—that men, the creatures of a day,  
 ‘ Whilst in their earthly state, a world so fill’d  
 ‘ With speaking monitors, so aptly form’d,  
 ‘ So wisely governed, so o’erspread with signs    220  
 ‘ Of goodness and intelligence, should once,  
 ‘ Have follow’d the vain forms that cross’d their path;  
 ‘ The shadows of a moment! unconcern’d  
 ‘ At that advancing and imperious hour  
 ‘ When Death shall claim his prey, while nature fails,  
 ‘ And the sick eye turns inward to find out  
 ‘ Its blessed recollections, and what joy  
 ‘ Faith hath left there—forgetful of that time,  
 ‘ When the dread doom approacheth of all flesh—  
 ‘ When the loud trump shall sound, and the dead rise  
 ‘ To immortality.

‘ If minds could doubt  
 ‘ Where all is certainty, men might suspect  
 ‘ That ever they on mortal ground had trod  
 ‘ And heard so clear the voice of Conscience, seen



- ‘ Such proofs of an hereafter, yet remained 235
- ‘ So callous to the certainty, which stood,
- ‘ Like the fair evening star in Heaven’s blue vault
- ‘ When all was dim beside.

‘ Angels like me

- ‘ Feel pity for a world involved in sin,
- ‘ Eut pity most we feel, when we behold 240
- ‘ Immortal souls, just peeping into life,
- ‘ And ignorant of all things—when we see
- ‘ These babes in knowledge, with presumptuous  
breath
- ‘ Arraign the DEITY! with critic eye
- ‘ Scan all his ways, here, of improvements speak,
- ‘ There, charge with folly.—Insects of an hour!
- ‘ Before, thus impious, Heaven’s Eternal King
- ‘ You venture to instruct, say who you are!
- ‘ Shew your credentials! In minuter things
- ‘ Display your power!—add fragrance to the rose;
- ‘ Or give new splendours to the rising sun.

- ‘ That untamed spirit, PRIDE, which peopled first
- ‘ Hell’s dark abodes, and made Omnipotence
- ‘ With thunders shake Heaven’s everlasting thrones,
- ‘ Now strays on earth, urged by whose counsels, man
- ‘ Looks higher than his Maker, and would fain,
- ‘ Direct, not follow—govern, not obey.

' Before my mission ceases, I must name  
 ' Duties severe, which to all men belong,  
 ' But, most, a King. Mark, and hereafter live !

' Thou art establish'd on thy throne. Thy foes  
 ' Now sleep in death, and thou hast long to live  
 ' In full prosperity. This is the lot  
 ' To thee appointed. If thy mind be right—  
 ' If thou preserve thy heart from life's low stains,  
 ' And look to God, he never will forsake  
 ' Thee nor thy house. Yet, ever bear in mind,—  
 ' Faith, like the bud that to maturity  
 ' Fails to arrive, in the great sight of Heaven,  
 ' No value holds. But th' immortal incense 270  
 ' That mounts on high, and with its fragrantcy  
 ' Fills the seraphic courts, is this—Pure love  
 ' Springing from faith, and scattering far and wide  
 ' Celestial fruit, which angels smile to see,—  
 ' Spreading o'er Heaven, a sudden light, which gives  
 ' New lustre to their pinions, as they wave,  
 ' Waking harmonious airs.

' Look thou to God,  
 ' And ever prize 'bove all created good—  
 ' Jesus thy Saviour!—thy Deliverer, Christ!  
 ' The pledge of hope! the anchor of the soul! 280  
 ' The bright and morning star! whose tranquil beam

' Shall light thee safe, through the dark vale of death;  
 ' Thy only comfort! He hath been the joy  
 ' Of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand  
 ' Who now have spread their palms and learn'd to sing  
 ' Hosannas in the highest; and he, still,  
 ' Will cheer each heir of glory, till that hour  
 ' When time shall be no more. Men, little think  
 ' What countless and eternal benefits  
 ' From him proceed—what blessings for his sake  
 ' God hath prepared, and what felicities  
 ' Await his true disciples: men who lived  
 ' Not for themselves but others, and who bore,  
 ' Like their great Master, many a load of woe,  
 ' And drank affliction's cup, and walk'd through earth  
 ' Like pilgrims, to a better country bound;  
 ' Tho' doom'd awhile, by wisdom infinite,  
 ' To stray through thorns, and bear the buffetings  
 ' Of Sin and Satan: yet, the strife will cease!  
 ' The journey shortly end! The race be o'er! 300  
 ' The crown be won!

' With lasting gratitude  
 ' Let thy breast glow, for that direction true,  
 ' 'Mid a dark world—the BOOK OF GOD! When joy  
 ' O'erwhelms, in vortex-like, thy dizzy mind,—  
 ' Makes every sound harmonious, every form 305  
 ' Appear in vernal beauties; lest the draught  
 ' Intoxicate, and hurry on thy feet

- ‘ To join the evil throng, who share the gift
- ‘ Unmindful of the Giver ; humbly turn
- ‘ To that assemblage of all heavenly things,      313
- ‘ Wisdom and righteousness, and mark the end
- ‘ Of those, who, in prosperity, forgot
- ‘ The God that made them, and whose bounteous hand
- ‘ Sent them their every blessing.    And when grief
- ‘ Presses thy spirit to the earth, still fly      315
- ‘ To the same FOUNTAIN OF ALL KNOWLEDGE GOOD!
- ‘ Its words shall sooth thy cares, remove thy doubts,
- ‘ Allay thy sorrows, level make thy path,
- ‘ Cheerful thy life, thy death serene, thine end
- ‘ Eternal glory !    ‘ There shalt thou behold      320
- ‘ In all dilemmas the right road to take :—
- ‘ In every state what duties rise, what deeds,
- ‘ Meet th’ applauding look of Heaven, what course
- ‘ The weary and way-faring man may tread :
- ‘ This ever prize !    So shall thy mind delight      325
- ‘ To seek thy people’s benefit, and strive
- ‘ To do all good ;    thy law be equity ;
- ‘ And whilst thou guide the sceptre, wear the crown,
- ‘ Thine eye behold, unmoved, the gaudy scenes
- ‘ Of pomp and splendour, and this truth remain,
- ‘ Stamp’d on thy heart—that Life a shadow is,
- ‘ A passing show, a meteor, seen awhile
- ‘ In gorgeous hues, but, fleeting as the light
- ‘ That from the dancing wave gives the sun’s image.

- ‘ But there are those who venture to reject 335  
 ‘ This only Light which ever earth received—  
 ‘ The Lamp, which God, in mercy to mankind,  
 ‘ Sent to direct their feet, to glad their hearts,  
 ‘ To warn them of an everlasting state:  
 ‘ With lofty spirit such may feign to spurn 340  
 ‘ The pearl above all price, may laugh in health,  
 ‘ May triumph in prosperity, may lean  
 ‘ Upon perverted reason, and strive hard  
 ‘ To think themselves secure; but they will find  
 ‘ A reed their staff, for soon the time shall come,  
 ‘ (If lull’d not by insensibility,)  
 ‘ When all their confidence will fail, their hearts  
 ‘ Shrink with dismay, and Death, in terrors dress’d,  
 ‘ Beckon with awful front, whilst all their sins,  
 ‘ In dread procession, move before their eyes, 350  
 ‘ Unpardon’d, at that hour—when the whole world  
 ‘ Would be exchanged for hope. In vain for such  
 ‘ The broad and sapphire gates of Heaven were spread;  
 ‘ They all refused to enter, they adored  
 ‘ The mammon of the world; tho’ light had reach’d  
 ‘ This dark benighted sphere, they prized it not—  
 ‘ **THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL!**

‘ More must I declare.

- ‘ There is a world of pain and wretchedness  
 ‘ Far in blank space, where the Iniquitous,

K

- ‘ Confined by adamantine bars, ’mid flames, 360
- ‘ Extend their tortured limbs, with writhes, and  
groans—
- ‘ Hell’s only music! where incessant rise
- ‘ Sulphureous clouds, that spread around, one night,
- ‘ Through whose thick mists the lightnings may not  
pierce
- ‘ When the loud thunders rattle. Here abide 365
- ‘ Offending souls, men who on earth abhorr’d
- ‘ All holiness, and in despite of Heaven
- ‘ Walk’d wickedly, nursing rebellious thoughts.

- ‘ All hateful things are here and venomous,
- ‘ Such as no tongue may name—tort’ring the frame;
- ‘ Yet these may be endured, but, one there is,—
- ‘ One furious foe, whose fang, gnaws at the heart,—
- ‘ CONSCIENCE! Her wrath no bribe can stay, no  
force
- ‘ Ward her assault; but, terrible she looks,
- ‘ And, to the man who fain would sleep, afresh
- ‘ Goads, and to his retreating eye, presents,
- ‘ Of earthly crimes, a catalogue, all black;
- ‘ Yet not a word she speaks, but evermore
- ‘ Points to the past!

- ‘ The Beings who endure
- ‘ The deepest agony, are not whom earth 380

‘ Call’d most diseased, impious and wicked men;—  
 ‘ It is the unjust King, the Governor,  
 ‘ Whatever name he bare, who, call’d to rule,  
 ‘ Flies from his trust, and, for himself, believes  
 ‘ All things were made—his will preeminent— 385  
 ‘ Sole favorite of Heaven. Here do such find,  
 ‘ Their error, and in unavailing sighs  
 ‘ Fill th’ infernal elements.

‘ But thoughts  
 ‘ And images like these, draw not the heart  
 ‘ By the sweet cords of Love. These suit the fierce  
 ‘ And untamed spirit, but, who progress make  
 ‘ In holiness and in the life divine,  
 ‘ Can act from Love: for should our Heavenly Sire  
 ‘ From terror be obey’d, to whom we owe  
 ‘ Such blessings infinite?—when all that lives, 395  
 ‘ And all that is, within us and around,  
 ‘ With voice most audible, to the mind’s ear,  
 ‘ Speaks of his boundless goodness? God is Love!—  
 ‘ First and most holy of immortal truths!  
 ‘ What spirit pure can doubt it?

‘ Where is he,  
 ‘ Who, in the silent solitary hour,  
 ‘ When meditation reigns, can look around  
 ‘ On all life’s wonderous host of things, and doubt,

' The love of Him who made them! Every form  
 ' Throughout all nature, opes its hundred mouths  
 ' To furnish man with arguments, to sound  
 ' His Maker's praise; for, not on man alone,  
 ' God heaps his favors, from th' o'erflowing spring  
 ' Of heavenly goodness, earth's vast family  
 ' Drink their refreshing draughts. Th' Eternal Sire;  
 ' Fountain of Love! Sun of the Universe!  
 ' Looks round upon the Creatures he has made,  
 ' And where he looks, spontaneous pleasures rise  
 ' And melting harmonies! What less than God  
 ' And goodness infinite, could bid the train 415  
 ' Of beauteous colours grace this lower earth?  
 ' Could make its secret caverns, and the host  
 ' Of vegetative forms, conspire to swell  
 ' Man's sum of blessings? What but power supreme—  
 ' Even Deity, could fill Heaven's boundless vault  
 ' With all th' innumerable host of Stars,  
 ' Sole emblem of stability on earth?—  
 ' Rolling th' eternal course!—What less than God,  
 ' Could make the Seasons run their glorious race,  
 ' And give to life, interminable bounds; 425  
 ' Bidding the air above, the earth beneath,  
 ' The ocean, teem with creatures, who exist  
 ' (Unconscious of existence) their brief hour,  
 ' And best display their unknown gratitude  
 ' In being happy?—Doubt not God is love! 430



' And when thou turnest thine admiring eye  
 ' From GOD, IN NATURE, to that vast expanse,  
 ' Dimming the sight, where e'en th' angelic mind  
 ' Is lost in wonder—GOD IN PROVIDENCE,  
 ' Who for one end, appointed all that is ! 435  
 ' How perfect and more visible the love !  
 ' Tho' Angels see but part—of the great plan  
 ' Which guides the Universe, the meanest man  
 ' (If that can be called mean, which hath the germ  
 ' Of immortality) shall see enough, 440  
 ' If willing to behold, to cheer his heart,  
 ' And make him trust, that that Almighty Hand,  
 ' So visible in seasons numberless,  
 ' Will still conduct him, till he reach the place  
 ' Where faith expires in sight. How should thy soul  
 ' Expand with gratitude for that best gift—  
 ' Immeasurably vast ! priceless as great !  
 ' THE HOPE OF AN HEREAFTER ; the belief,  
 ' Founded on God's good word, that thou wilt yet  
 ' Survive the wreck of nature, and enjoy 450  
 ' The Father of thy spirit, in a world  
 ' Where blessedness shall dwell, where Christ shall  
 reign,  
 ' Where sin shall be no more, and God Himself  
 ' Shall wipe the final tear from every eye !

' And can that God whose attribute is love— 455  
 ' Whose whole creation teems with happiness,

' Delight in morbid feelings, and the heart  
 ' That ever pores o'er something, undefined—  
 ' All miserable? Can our Heavenly Sire,  
 ' Well pleased, behold the creatures he has made  
 ' Cherish suspicions of Himself, and tho'  
 ' Nurs'd in the lap of comfort, all, pass by,—  
 ' To languish o'er ideal miseries;  
 ' Or, mourn some distant and extraneous ill,—  
 ' Insect by insect torn, or the fierce blast 465  
 ' Whose unconceived and death-devoting ire  
 ' Half wither'd in its course—the polar Bear,  
 ' Howling to darkness? Gratitude is sweet!  
 ' Man loves it, and the offering God approves.  
 ' He asks, for all his countless benefits, 470  
 ' No hard return—the mind, to thankfulness,  
 ' Tuned, and a cheerful heart—best evidence  
 ' Of hidden virtues!—Murder never smiles!

' But cheerfulness the Christian most becomes!  
 ' Why should the man whose heart aspires to God,  
 ' Who walks by faith, who hath communion sweet  
 ' With holy spirits—the promise of this life  
 ' And that which is to come; why should *his* heart  
 ' Be sorrowful? Let terror shake their frames  
 ' Who have no God to trust in! Let those men 480  
 ' On melancholy brood and never taste  
 ' Of cheerfulness, who, 'mid the storms of life,  
 ' Behold no heavenly Pilot; who survey

' Confusion and thick clouds, looking, dismay'd,  
 ' O'er the dark chaos of conjecture, chain'd 485  
 ' To earth and earthly hopes; but let the men  
 ' Who seek another and abiding rest—  
 ' A heavenly country, smile, for all is theirs,  
 ' Or life, or death, things present, things to come.  
 ' Such should rejoice, and ever in their face 490  
 ' Display content and gladness, sorrowing not,  
 ' Save for an erring world, and that *their* hearts  
 ' So seldom rise 'bove this sublunar sphere,  
 ' So seldom know the burden of that joy,  
 ' Christians should feel—Heirs of Eternal Life ! 495

' But tho' benevolence rules all that is,  
 ' For needful purposes, as yet unknown,  
 ' There is a certain residue of ill  
 ' Ever to dwell on earth, tho' good men strive 500  
 ' To check its growth, as well befitteth them.  
 ' It is an evil world! this will be found  
 ' Whatever fairy schemes of happiness  
 ' Men fondly shape. But tho', Perfection, Earth  
 ' Can ne'er attain, shall not her Sons aspire 505  
 ' Near to approach as may be? Shall they fail  
 ' To cross some limpid stream, because no foot  
 ' Hath e'er the ocean forded?

' Many ills,

' And of gigantic shapes, stalk through the earth,  
 ' Not needful, but the effect of those who guide  
 ' The stream—Authority, yet turn it not  
 ' To fertilize the mead, but, bid it lave  
 ' The desert, where all noxious verdure thrives.  
 ' Therefore, hereafter, heavier is the hand  
 ' Of God upon them,—making e'en the Murd'rer,  
 ' Forgetful of his own consuming pangs,  
 ' Stand by and pity.

' Yet, rejoice to hear!

' If greater be the punishment of those  
 ' Who power perverted, so felicities,  
 ' 'Bove all their race, in yonder starry sphere 520  
 ' Wait to reward them, if on earth they ruled  
 ' In equity, and well discharged the trust  
 ' Of their high state. For punishments are dealt,  
 ' In the approaching world, not to the men,  
 ' With strictest recompence, who most of ill 525  
 ' Did in their day, but to those unjust Stewards,  
 ' Who might have good perform'd; on every side  
 ' Hearing the calls of Duty, yet who spurn'd  
 ' The bold intruder, and in selfishness  
 ' Wrapt themselves round.

' ALFRED! be thou resolved

' Well to perform thy part; and ever know

' From whence assistance comes. Be this thy name,—  
 ' The Father of thy People ! Cherish worth !  
 ' Where talent is, turn it to good ! Prevent,  
 ' With Power's strong arm, all violence to men,  
 ' All cruelty to Brutes :—*For God beholds,*  
 ' *With a paternal eye, his lowest works,*  
 ' *And hath appointed for th' unfeeling heart*  
 ' *Deep and peculiar punishments.* Delight  
 ' To see the poor man smile ! soften his wants !  
 ' For Poverty the Parent is, of crimes,  
 ' And many vices, which from Heaven will find  
 ' Lenient remark ; whilst those—the true offenders !  
 ' Who, with the wretched, brotherhood disclaim'd,  
 ' Standing aloof, viewing the gaunt foe—Want 545  
 ' Assail their dwelling : striving not to rouse  
 ' Virtue's dim spark within them :—leaving thus,  
 ' Immortal souls, through their dark way to grope,  
 ' Unfriended, uninform'd ; shall find of God—  
 ' Just recompence !

' A good King happiest feels  
 ' To see his People happy !—such be thou !  
 ' Instruct the ignorant ; and, as the spring—  
 ' The source of best instruction, spread the sound  
 ' Salvation dealt to man ! Give them the food,  
 ' God hath appointed ! This shall tame their hearts,  
 ' Howe'er rebellious ; this shall cure the ill,

'When other things all fail : so shalt thou join  
 ' After due course, the New Jerusalem,—  
 ' Stupendous thought ! Yes, even thou shalt join,  
 ' (With each of the redeemed of the Lord,) 560  
 ' Th' innumerable company of Angels !  
 ' The gen'ral Church, and the first-born of Heaven !  
 ' The God of all ! the Spirits of Just Men,  
 ' Made perfect ! and that sole procuring cause  
 ' Of all their joy—the Mediator, Christ ! 565

' If thou would'st other knowledge know, declare !  
 ' For I am sent to caution and inform.'  
 The King thus seem'd to say. ' Bright Messenger !  
 ' Communicant of holy mysteries !  
 ' Thou hast my praise ! Angel immortal, hail ! 570  
 ' I would inquire, with due humility,  
 ' The nature of thy office, and what good  
 ' Thou hast bestow'd on me.' To whom the Angel.

' Favour'd of God ! unnumber'd are the pits;  
 ' Some seen, but most unseen, which throng life's  
     path, 575  
 ' And send the unsuspecting traveller  
 ' To his long home. Many hast thou escaped,  
 ' Not of thyself, for thou hast often rush'd  
 ' 'Mid thickest dangers, but, thy heart was right,  
 ' Thou trusted'st in thy God, and I upheld, 580

' By Him commission'd, thine unguarded feet,  
 ' Through perils, that thou little knewest of.

' Deep and mysterious are the ways of Heaven !  
 ' Faintly perceived by us, to thee all dark.  
 ' One thing thou yet may'st know, for 'tis revealed  
 ' By Moses and the Prophets, tho' unseen  
 ' By all, whose hearts, whose eyes, Mammon, accurst !  
 ' Hath dimm'd and harden'd.—He who trusts in God,  
 ' Shall yet rejoice.

' In journeying through this world,  
 ' Dangers on every side stand thick ; man's eye  
 ' Cannot descry them ! under streams they are,  
 ' And beds of roses, in the verdant mead—  
 ' The desert waste—the city populous ;—  
 ' And in the small hut, by the mountain's side—  
 ' On hills and in the vallies. All alike 595  
 ' Stand open to the wrathful enemy  
 ' That lurks unseen. Such is the earthly race,  
 ' All men must run, exposed at every step  
 ' To sorrows infinite, and pain, and death.  
 ' But there is one defence, and one alone. 600  
 ' The Maker of the world and all therein,  
 ' Hath so ordain'd, that he whose heart implores  
 ' Celestial guidance, shall from him receive  
 ' A Guardian, like to me, whose keener eye,

- From real, not apparent harm, shall lead 605
- The faithful suppliant, and at last conduct
- O'er Death's dark gulf to Heaven.

- For, round this world,
- Tho' unperceiv'd there stands a depth profound,
- Far wider than the eye may stretch, the Gulf
- Which earth divides from the eternal state! 610
- Yet, that the shivering soul may not despair,
- We ministering Spirits, sent of God,
- Stand at the verge, and all who rightly ask
- Receive our free assistance, and are borne
- Where sorrow is not; but the men who trust 615
- Their native strength, and, proud of heart, rely
- On their own worth or wisdom, find, too late,
- Their folly, and to wretchedness descend
- Swifter than shooting star. Who would believe
- On such conditions, men would rather die, 620
- Than live, yet such it is!

- But I would now,
- Further inform thee. Through th' appointed path
- All men must run, in this their earthly race,
- Evil full often seems the better thing,
- And good the evil. By th' immortal laws 625
- This is ordain'd, to teach poor erring man
- The penalty of crimes—virtue's high worth,



' And from experience, fruitful source of light,  
 ' By slow progression, to instruct the heart  
 ' Where wisdom lies.

' Some pitfalls are to death,  
 ' Some quicken foresight, and awake the prayer  
 ' For better guidance. Ever then at hand,  
 ' We are, to yield our aid invisible.  
 ' And often do we lead, dissatisfied,  
 ' Men from their certain bane, or, half permit 635  
 ' Their feet to fall, to loosen that deep root  
 ' Of self-dependence, all men love so well.

' The deadliest poisons oft are found to dwell  
 ' With flowers most fair, to come within whose breath  
 ' Reuses the pestilence, and sinks the heart 640  
 ' To that worst state—Insensibility !  
 ' Where the soul groans, yet learns not to be wise.  
 ' Then is our virtue tried. We know the path,  
 ' That death attends it, and full often lead  
 ' Weak men from ruin, whilst he thinks it hard  
 ' To see the flattering good, yet, turn away.  
 ' And often do we find it right, to lead  
 ' Through crooked ways and brambles, 'mid steep hills,  
 ' And pathless vallies, to escape some harm  
 ' Unseen, but more severe, that lead to death. 650

' From Infancy our exercise begins.  
 ' We tend the Infant from the hour it breathes,  
 ' Till reason dawns, or, wretched were the state  
 ' Of helpless childhood. In its tender years  
 ' What evils lurk to whelm it in the grave ! 655  
 ' But we, with most especial earnestness,  
 ' Ever surround, ward off each secret foe,  
 ' And feed the intellectual spark, ere long  
 ' To shine abroad, and in the face of man  
 ' Picture the Deity. Now will I speak 660  
 ' Of my appointment, and the services  
 ' I have perform'd for thee.

' Thy Guardian I,  
 ' Constant have succour'd thee, in hours so dark,  
 ' They seem'd desertion ; but th' Almighty Sire  
 ' Then loved thee most, and led thee in the way,  
 ' Best suited to secure thy better part—  
 ' Thy soul hereafter. Thou with thy whole power  
 ' Hast sought Him, and implored His ministry  
 ' From youth, 'till now, and tho' God often hides  
 ' The secret purpose of his ways to man, 670  
 ' And makes him walk by faith, yet I am now,  
 ' Permitted to assume a character,  
 ' Clear to thine organs, to declare the ways  
 ' Thou hast been led in, that thy heart may learn.

‘ More truly to confide in Heaven.

‘ When youth

‘ Gave to thee reason, I with heighten’d joy  
 ‘ Perceived thy heart implore that better Guide,  
 ‘ All need, tho’ few require, and still remain’d  
 ‘ Thy guardian Spirit. Little dost thou know  
 ‘ What benefits and untold blessings spring 680  
 ‘ From such dependence. Spirits like myself  
 ‘ Space cannot stop !

‘ And sometimes when engaged

‘ In shouting loud Hosannas, ’mid the choir  
 ‘ Of Angels and Archangels, I have seen  
 ‘ Perils await thee, and beside thee stood, 685  
 ‘ Directing! whilst the sluggish sun-beam bright,  
 ‘ Toil’d after me.—Such is an Angel’s speed!

‘ Nor deem it strange that one like me should bound

‘ His narrow influence ; for, all the Orders  
 ‘ Of high Intelligencies, progress make 690  
 ‘ Toward Love’s pure spring, ebullient with each good;  
 ‘ Whose radiant waters all the holy Spirits  
 ‘ Drink ever, and delightful visions feel,—  
 ‘ The heart expanding ; making each endure  
 ‘ For all that lives, divinest sympathy, 695  
 ‘ And more intense benevolence. High Heaven  
 ‘ All hath appointed, by gradations meet,  
 ‘ To run this race, and, by steps infinite,

' Move toward perfection. Thus material beings,  
 ' Love first their friends, their country, the whole  
   ' world, 700  
 ' Preparing thus their minds for nobler views—  
 ' Their wings for higher flights ; and last of all,  
 ' Archangels, toiling still, and still to toil  
 ' In this most glorious exercise, adore—  
 ' The drop, the stream, and last of all approach, 705  
 ' Nearer, tho' ever distant, the pure Spring,  
 ' The Fountain of all Love.

                                  ' Now will I say  
 ' What benefits thou hast received from me:  
 ' Gifted with prescience of thy future life,  
 ' I saw thy dangers, and with anxious care 710  
 ' Sought to avert them, or, alike, improve  
 ' All to thy good. I saw thy furious foe,  
 ' IVAR of Denmark (ere he pass'd the seas  
 ' To ravage Britain) slay the Mariner  
 ' Beside the waves: I saw th' illusions rise 715  
 ' To vex his spirit, tried and exercised,  
 ' So from him to extort the vow, that saved  
 ' In after times thy Queen. These visions rose  
 ' Consistent with his own dark prejudice !  
 ' For, to believe the possibility 720  
 ' Is half to see, the thing believed. Doubt not,  
 ' That I, ALSWITHA thus should serve, for know,

' The Guardian Angel, may at times confer  
 ' With other Angels ; and provide for one,  
 ' As I, for her, by laws to thee unknown. 725

' I saw thee in that depth of wretchedness,  
 ' When by the mountain brook, thou badest go  
 ' Thy troops to SELWOOD, and across the heath  
 ' Bore thy young Child—ALSWITHA by thy side,  
 ' Mournful and destitute. I led thy feet 730  
 ' To neighbouring Abbey, I impell'd thee thence  
 ' To seek the cottage, where, when thou hadst heard  
 ' Of Glastonbury fallen, and resolved  
 ' To war again ; thou swore'st ! and, that oath—  
 ' By The Eternal God !' Word utter'd not, 735  
 ' By Angels, but with veiling of the face !—  
 ' Pause ever at that name !

' For wise designs  
 ' The Abbey walls were rased—the mad Danes sent  
 ' To scatter death, but, 'mid the terrors round,  
 ' Thy Queen I safe conducted, and, at length, 740  
 ' Gave her a weeping captive to that foe—  
 ' Belov'd of Heaven,—the man, who hence shall shine,  
 ' Great in all virtues. Thus, adoring view  
 ' Th' Almighty hand, that in the tempest moves !—  
 ' In storms and in the whirlwind, perfecting 745  
 ' His great designs ! for as the Heavens are high

L

- Above this lower earth, so are His thoughts
- Above our thoughts, His ways above our ways.

- That she thy Queen a captive should become,
- By Heaven's all-seeing eye, needful was deem'd
- To try thy faith,—her own—discord to raise
- Within the Danish camp; (for 'tis ordain'd
- Before a people fall, that first shall rise
- The Fiend Dissension) and, at last, convert
- GUTHRUM the Dane. Hence when affliction hangs
- Heavy upon thee, doubt not the design,
- As sent in mercy. I the Saxon's foot,
- Directed to approach thy Child, and 'mid
- The trackless waste, sent him—by the same road
- Thyself had trod, to obscure cottage low. 760
- In hour of sadness I thy footstep led,
- Where that old man the Hermit walk'd, and gave
- Soft words of honey to his tongue, to cheer
- Thy languid breast, and rouse the dormant spark
- Of faith within thee. I the mother sent— 765
- That aged woman, by the forest's verge
- To tell her tale, and as thou listenedst sad,
- IVAR pass'd on unseeing thee. So him,
- Who stops to hear the tale of misery,
- Blessings shall follow! I attended thee 770
- When known but to thyself. I clear'd thy path
- From many perils; in the green-wood shade,

' And when thou soughtest IVAN's camp, I round  
 ' Hover'd incessant ;—in thy mind call'd up  
 ' The thought that saved thee,—to assume the man,  
 ' Smitten of God ;—and from thy ready tongue,  
 ' Pronounced wild words.

' But now the time drew near,  
 ' That needed my best power, the day of fight.  
 ' I sought thee in the battle ! I beheld  
 ' Each lurking danger that beset thy path,        780  
 ' And o'er thy head my unseen helmet cast !  
 ' And I will still be with thee ; I will lead  
 ' Thy feet in pleasant paths. Whilst thy heart loves  
 ' Thy Friend and Maker, He will give me charge  
 ' To follow thee, and thou shalt to the world        785  
 ' Shine forth resplendent, and shalt shew mankind  
 ' How beautiful the feet of him who walks  
 ' In Zion's ways.

' Now must I bid adieu !  
 ' The mem'ry of these words, preserve through life !  
 ' So in the hour of death shalt thou behold        790  
 ' Again thy GUARDIAN ANGEL.'

With his mind  
 Fill'd by the heavenly vision, ALFRED woke.

END OF BOOK XXIII.

## ALFRED. BOOK XXIV.

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 ARGUMENT.

*BAPTISM of Guthrum and his followers; interview of Alfred and Alswitha with their Infant Child; the King's last Address to his Troops.*

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THE morning star, faint in the western sky,  
 Had now retired, whilst, in his orient path,  
 The Sun, enthroned in splendor, upward rose,  
 Majestic, scattering o'er one half the world  
 Such pure and radiant beams, that, for awhile,     5  
 Earth seem'd annihilate, and Heaven to pour,  
 Through jasper gates, of unimagined light,  
 His floods of glory. Whilst each heart beat high  
 With exultation, to the Royal tent,  
 ODDUNE advanced, and said, 'The Dane awaits.'  
 And now, before the King, GUTHRUM appear'd,  
 Leading his Daughter, whom the Queen approach'd,  
 And, hand in hand, led gently on, to share  
 The private converse; whilst her Sire drew near,  
 And ALFRED thus address'd:

'Most noble Prince!



' Thy frown I could have borne, but thou, this heart  
 ' Hast conquer'd by thy kindness. I am one  
 ' Who ever thought his oath inviolate,  
 ' And soon, from purer principles, will keep  
 ' That oath to God more firm,—when next I swear  
 ' Thou art my Monarch! Yester night I sought  
 ' Our neighbouring castle, where, the anxious Danes  
 ' Look'd for me sad, and on each passing breeze  
 ' Fancied they saw my spirit; such belief  
 ' Had they that I was slain: and tho' I came, 25  
 ' And in mine own and proper shape appear'd,  
 ' They question'd their own sight, half prone to say,  
 ' Impostor! GUTHRUM is no more! I now  
 ' Declared thy conduct, all thy noble words:  
 ' How thou forgavest me, and for my sake 30  
 ' Promis'd to pardon them. I told them more—  
 ' Of the religion I had late profess'd:  
 ' In my best way explain'd its influence;  
 ' The power it had to tame the mind, and make  
 ' The jarring world one family of love. 35  
 ' I pointed out our foster'd hopes, how low  
 ' Compared with thine. I named the Christian's joy,  
 ' How pure his character—how great his deeds,  
 ' And for the certain test appeal'd to thee.  
 ' They heard me, wondering, and, oh King rejoice!  
 ' Join in my rapture, when to thee I say,  
 ' They vow'd to be thy subjects, here to dwell

' Beneath so brave a Prince. But, more I say,  
 ' They seek to become Christians, earnestly,  
 ' With genuine zeal, and now without this tent 45  
 ' Thirty brave Chieftains stand,\* anxious to shew,  
 ' Their gratitude, and to partake with me,  
 ' And this, my daughter, whom thy hand hath saved,  
 ' The rite baptism.'

ALFRED, glad, replied :

' Firm is my trust in thee, and on thy faith 50  
 ' I take thy fellows. They with thee shall share .  
 ' The holy ordinance; and if their hearts,  
 ' Kindness may reach, a happier race, the Sun,  
 ' Shall never visit. Tell them to repair,  
 ' Where silver THONET† meandering glides along,  
 ' And be thou with them. There shall you meet me.'

Forth to the river's brink they pass'd along,  
 Whilst all the multitude of Saxons gazed  
 In silent admiration. Now the King,  
 Stately and slow, drew near, whilst follow'd him,  
 The Queen, conducting to the ritual stream,

\* Aulre was the name of the village, in Somersetshire,  
 where Guthrum and thirty of his leaders were baptised.  
 Asser says, Alfred himself assisted at their baptism.

† A river in Somersetshire.

The Danish Maiden. Lowly on the ground  
 She look'd, her steps were timid, and her form  
 Graceful, and chaste her eye; whilst on her cheek  
 Appear'd the blush of youth and innocence. 65  
 When ALFRED, with commanding aspect, slow,  
 Descended to the water, when he call'd,  
 Each warrior Dane, the Maiden and her Sire,  
 Whom, solemn, he address'd :

‘ GUTHRUM! and you

‘ Who thus surround me, you are now about 70  
 ‘ To make profession of a faith divine.  
 ‘ It is no little thing, thus to profess  
 ‘ The Christian convert. He who comes to God  
 ‘ Must own him such, and from his inmost soul,  
 ‘ Desire his teaching. Pure, the God we serve,  
 ‘ And he demands the heart! You must renounce,  
 ‘ Ere you can be accepted—Envy—Wrath,  
 ‘ Revenge, and every evil way. Your souls  
 ‘ Must feel, for all men, love, and view mankind,  
 ‘ As children of one parent, who demands, 80  
 ‘ Each friendly office, and the fervent prayer  
 ‘ That those who knew him not, may yet be taught.  
 ‘ And as the way most certain to obtain  
 ‘ Favour from Heaven,—receive his holy word,  
 ‘ Soon to be laid before your wondering eyes, 85  
 ‘ Which tells us all things, needful to be known,

‘ And points the road to future happiness.  
 ‘ There will you learn how God all merciful,  
 ‘ Pitied degenerate men, and to release  
 ‘ Their race from bondage, sent his Son, inspir’d, 90  
 ‘ With the full burden of Divinity,  
 ‘ To tell of sacred things, and to direct  
 ‘ All men aright; so to escape the woes,  
 ‘ And penal fires, which disobedient souls  
 ‘ Must feel hereafter, if they live and die, 95  
 ‘ Estranged from God and from all holiness.  
 ‘ If from thy conscience, GUTHRUM! thou canst say,  
 ‘ This faith is thine, and you who round me stand,  
 ‘ And Maiden, thou!—Bend and receive the wave!  
 All bent devoutly, pressing their full hearts, 100  
 Declaring trust in Christ. And as they stood,  
 There came a sudden pause. No word was heard!  
 No low and passing sound woke the still scene,  
 But all was silent—waves, and earth, and air;  
 And each of the unnumber’d multitude,— 105  
 Gazing around, felt such a solemn hush,  
 All things pervade, and seem’d so sensible  
 Of His dread presence—His, the God of all!  
 That, to himself, each seem’d to shrink to naught,  
 And his own insignificance feel, 110  
 As never he had felt. Even like the man  
 Who, in a musing hour, wanders beside  
 The white and roaring ocean, when its waves,

Conflicting lash the shore; and all around,  
 Far as the black horizon, shews one scene; 115  
 Terrific, vast, which to his mind calls up  
 The wrath of Deity.—Then, when he thinks,  
 Viewing the world of waters, on himself,  
 And seems to say—to every grain of sand—  
 ‘Thou art my brother!’

Having left the tide, 120

The King to his new converts thus began:  
 ‘Behold in me your Sov’reign! view your friend!  
 ‘For I am he. Now shall you all behold  
 ‘In ALFRED a Protector! one whose heart,  
 ‘Remembering not the past, with growing care,  
 ‘Plans for your good, and who will ever seek,  
 ‘How best to make you happy. I will hence  
 ‘Provide due lands,\* and you shall comforts share,  
 ‘With us, in common. GUTHRUM! thou art dear  
 ‘As any man to me, and thou shalt find 130  
 ‘My words substantial, thou shalt hence enjoy  
 ‘Truly, thy Monarch’s favour.’ GUTHRUM sought  
 In vain for utterance, he could only say,  
 ‘Thy God be mine!’

Then to the Danish Maid,

\* Alfred gave the whole of East-Anglia to Guthrum and his followers.

Who pensive stood, the Queen advanced and cried,  
 ' Sister beloved! my heart hath room for thee.  
 ' Ere this, thy friendship has been proved, and now,  
 ' Mine shall appear, later, but not less true.'  
 The Damsel press'd her hand, yet spake not.

When

A messenger drew near, and cried, ' Oh King!  
 ' An aged pair, with one, a child, now wait  
 ' In yonder tent to see thee.' ALFRED's heart,  
 Leap'd, yet he spake not: whilst the Queen turn'd pale  
 At the glad news, and would have rush'd to meet,  
 But, mindful of her dignity, she mov'd, 143  
 Stately along, whilst her heart throbb'd with joy,  
 'Till where no eye beheld her, when she sped,  
 Rapid and light as doth the passing shadow  
 Of the wild sea-bird o'er the curling waves.  
 Now to the tent she came. She saw her Child!—  
 Her long-lost Child! She sprang! She clasp'd him  
 round!

He knew her face, and with his little hands  
 His mother press'd. ' My Child! my Child!' she cried,  
 The tear gush'd forth, and in her arms she held,  
 Silent, her Child.

The King had GUTHRUM sent—  
 Him and his daughter and the Danish Chiefs,

To the near castle, greetings to convey  
 And lasting peace ; and now with hasty step  
 Approach'd the tent with all a father's warmth,  
 Leaning on ODDUNE.

At the door he saw 160

ACCA, and rushing through the company,  
 Exclaim'd, ' Where art thou ? ' In his mother's arms  
 He saw his Child ! when with transporting joy,  
 He held him, and, appealing to high Heaven,  
 Cried, ' This our consummation ! This the point  
 ' For which our hearts have sigh'd. Mild innocent !  
 ' With other thoughts do I behold thee now,  
 ' Than when I left thee ! Thou art hence released  
 ' From dangers and thick perils, and shalt dwell,  
 ' Safe with thy parents, cherish'd by their care.  
 ' Go, lovely Boy ! go to thy mother's arms,  
 ' And there be happy !'

Turning, near, he saw,  
 The rustic Pair from Ethelney, and cried,  
 ' I greet you, friends ! CEOLRIC, welcome here !  
 ' And ACCA, for thy faithfulness and love 175  
 ' To this my Child, whose rosy cheeks declare  
 ' Thy service—take my thanks ! and thou shalt soon  
 ' Receive a nobler gift. I do not yet  
 ' Say thy reward, but thou ere long may'st hope,

' With this thy faithful husband, to possess      180  
 ' All good, which from the friendship of a King,  
 ' Reason may ask and gratitude bestow.\*  
 Lowly they bow'd. When ALFRED thus again:

' These are your sons! Brave and intrepid youths!  
 ' To own such parents might alone secure      185  
 ' Your Monarch's favour, but a higher claim  
 ' You boast—an independence, resting firm  
 ' Upon your own high merit. To your swords,  
 ' I owe my life! Ye gallant youths, expect  
 ' No sordid recompence! My thoughts are deeds!  
 ' Now, for a while, retire!' Forth they withdrew,  
 Looking to Heaven, but language they had none!  
 Theirs was the deep and fix'd astonishment—  
 The glowing admiration, which requires,  
 Not words but silence.

Looking round, the King  
 Beheld, till then unseen, SIGBERT, and said:  
 ' I joy to see thee! welcome at this hour  
 ' Of general joy! Thy spirit has endured,  
 ' Ere this, deep injuries, and thou hast oft  
 ' Lost thy due equipoise: But God hath said,      200

\* Alfred, soon after he was established on his throne,  
 made Ceolric bishop of Winchester.



' He sees our frame, He knows that we are dust !  
 ' And I forgive thee, thou my favour hast.  
 ' Yet do not think, that with forgetting ill,  
 ' I lose the good—injuries I may forget,  
 ' But favours cannot. SIGBERT, oft thy zeal 205  
 ' Hath help'd me. Thou hast foremost stood, in hours  
 ' Trying, to do me service, and thy heart,  
 ' I know is right ! To thee do I ascribe  
 ' Yon Infant's life—tidings of her thou seest—  
 ' ALSWITHEA, Heaven's best gift !'

SIGBERT look'd up,  
 When, thro' his labouring mind, rush'd the quick  
 thought,

As on the Queen he cast his eye, of her  
 Who on a former day, pleaded so well  
 The cause of pity, when the Danish Chief,  
 GUTHRUM, her bore away. The Queen drew near,  
 And cried, ' I thank thee ! Thou hast well perform'd  
 ' A Subject's part, but that thou mett'st my Child  
 ' And screenedst him from harm, thou hast my thanks  
 ' Next after God.—I am thy friend indeed.'  
 When thus the King:

' Doubtless now Peace, around,  
 ' Hath spread her fostering wing, thy mind will back  
 ' To its past channel turn ; and I shall see,

' SIGBERT, as heretofore, not when he breath'd  
 ' Threatenings and slaughter. So will I be found,  
 ' A friend sincere; and thou shalt live beneath 225  
 ' Thy Monarch's favour, and all good partake.  
 ' To shew thee that thy services I prize,  
 ' This my first confidence. On the south verge  
 ' Of Selwood's forest, an old Hermit dwells,  
 ' Whom late I talk'd with. Seek his lone abode,  
 ' And lead him hither. He is one whom God  
 ' His Spirit hath pour'd out upon, and taught  
 ' Great truths. I need his converse! Princes stand,  
 ' Firmest and most secure, when round them throng  
 ' Good and enlighten'd men.\*

' Near him abides,—  
 ' Thou knowest where! an aged woman; her  
 ' Whom we accosted, when the Danish Chief  
 ' IVAR, to meet his brother sped. Find out,  
 ' And tell her she may hope some better days—  
 ' Some solitary joys, if joys can reach 240  
 ' A heart robb'd of its earthly heritage—  
 ' The child of her old age. Tell her the King

\* Alfred rendered himself remarkable for the encouragement he gave to learning. The most learned men of Europe flocked to his court, and were uniformly received with distinguished honors.

‘ Designs her good! Do these small offices,  
 ‘ SIGBERT! and I mean time will plan for thee.’

SIGBERT replied :

‘ The happiness this hour 245  
 ‘ Affords me, Heaven alone can judge! My heart  
 ‘ Throbs with transporting joy. That thou art safe—  
 ‘ That thou hast rescued this our native land,  
 ‘ From ravagers, fierce and unfeeling men :  
 ‘ And now art here, thou, and thy Queen, and Child!  
 ‘ Than this I need no other recompence.’  
 Which said, he pass’d the door.

‘ Now,’ cried the King,  
 ‘ ODDUNE, one word to thee. Friend! Counsellor!  
 ‘ Let me my mind unburden at this hour,  
 ‘ For full it is, o’erflowing. Visions bright 255  
 ‘ Dance round me, and the scenes as yet unborn,  
 ‘ Look fair. A secret whisper in mine ear  
 ‘ Tells me the time is come, when I may see  
 ‘ My people happy. I, their Monarch made,  
 ‘ To do them good, and, from her hiding-place, 260  
 ‘ Call Virtue forth.—Shall e’er the hour arrive,  
 ‘ When this my breast, glowing with great designs,  
 ‘ Prosperity shall mildew? when mine eyes,  
 ‘ Weary of seeing good, shall turn to view  
 ‘ Evil and love it? Shall the moment come, 265

- ‘ When, heedless of past sorrows, I shall stand
- ‘ Giddy with praise?—with flattery lifted high,
- ‘ And to myself ascribe these benefits?—
- ‘ Forsake me not—Father of Heaven and Earth !

- ‘ With other than the boaster’s heart, I say,—
- ‘ Fled are our foes, as were the morning mists
- ‘ When the Sun rose. Britain is now releas’d
- ‘ From the fierce Dane, and every scene around,
- ‘ Smiles on me. After looking up to God,
- ‘ Whose arm upheld us, can I thee behold, 275
- ‘ Nor think of thy deserts? In every toil
- ‘ Perplexity and care, my constant stay,
- ‘ Whose words have cheer’d me, whose advice hath  
served,
- ‘ Whose sword protected, and whose name alone
- ‘ Made the invaders tremble. Honor’d friend !
- ‘ Idle it were to say thy happiness
- ‘ Close is allied to mine! To do thee good,
- ‘ Constant, shall be my care, and to reward
- ‘ Thy nameless services. But thou wilt find,
- ‘ Thy Monarch’s gratitude, great as it is, 285
- ‘ And all his benefits, a trifling good,
- ‘ Compared with the full consciousness within,
- ‘ Of duties vast and trying, well discharged.—
- ‘ Most precious feeling! such as I would hope,
- ‘ One day to know myself—my dying day.’ 290

ODDUNE replied, ' The joy which now I feel,  
 ' Thou must not doubt, at seeing thee, oh King!  
 ' Raised from thy abject state, and on thy throne  
 ' Establish'd, long I trust to rule these realms.—  
 ' Rate not my merit thus! My soul was roused  
 ' By thy example. Thou my spirit taught'st  
 ' To scorn oppression, and the ravenous bands  
 ' That scourged our Isle. I dream'd as others dream'd  
 ' 'Till thou appearedst, and the latent spark,  
 ' Bade blaze within me. Dormant had I lain,  
 ' And all our race,—dishearten'd, but for thee!'

When ALFRED thus: ' My words must now be few.  
 ' Hereafter will I tell thee many things.—  
 ' Ere from this memorable plain we pass  
 ' To seek our homes, once more will I address  
 ' My gallant troops. ALSWITHA by my side,  
 ' With this her Child, shall stand; and ODDUNE, thou!  
 ' Then for my last address.'

The Queen arose,  
 And with her infant Boy, majestic,  
 Moved toward the troops. Whilst ALFRED and the  
 Chief,

ODDUNE, walk'd after her. The Herald spake,  
 When instant, near their King, his Subjects throng,  
 And all was silence.

M

Loftier than the rest,  
 Stood ALFRED. On one side, the Queen appear'd,  
 Bearing her Child, and on the other, ODDUNE;  
 While the vast host of Saxons, all around,  
 Intent, stood list'ning; when the King his arm  
 Raised and began.

‘ My Subjects, yet once more,  
 ‘ I claim your patience! Joy inspires my breast,  
 ‘ At this good hour, to mark that earnest look,  
 ‘ Which tells me, what I say, will not be lost.  
 ‘ I would again, whilst near the field of fight,  
 ‘ Speak to you from an overflowing heart,  
 ‘ And name, what joys, what prospects, now we have;  
 ‘ What evils are past by, and what is due  
 ‘ To Heaven above, and you His instruments.—

‘ Now is our Foe no more! The fearful clouds  
 ‘ That o'er our heads hung low'ring, and with threats  
 ‘ Of devastating fury, through the land,  
 ‘ Spread terror and most ominous surprise;—  
 ‘ Like midnight dreams are vanish'd, and the sun,  
 ‘ In new and gorgeous splendour, decks himself!  
 ‘ Raise high your voices! With heart melody,  
 ‘ Sound the deep tones of gratitude! for now,  
 ‘ Danger is o'er! That blessing, which, to taste,  
 ‘ Our Fathers sought, yet to the grave went down,

‘ And knew it not, that blessing—Peace, is ours?  
 ‘ At death they trembled, not for their own sakes,  
 ‘ For they were good and faithful, but, they saw,  
 ‘ When leaving this low earth, the gathering cloud,  
 ‘ And fear’d for us their children. Cease to fear,  
 ‘ Ye holy martyrs! Honor’d shades, behold,  
 ‘ Our bands are broken, and Britannia’s soil,  
 ‘ Once more is free! Where is the languid heart  
 ‘ At such an hour? Where stands the man whose  
     breast

‘ Feels not my transport? Where is he who views  
 ‘ What Heaven hath wrought, with black indifference?  
 ‘ He lives not to pollute the air! Your hearts,  
 ‘ Glow on your cheeks and glisten in your eyes!

‘ Now to your homes, with souls elate, return,  
 ‘ Long left, but not forgotten! Now prepare  
 ‘ To call from crags, and caves, and forests deep,  
 ‘ Your frightened offspring and your trembling wives,  
 ‘ And prize the treasures ye have bled to save!  
 ‘ Now till the soil, nor fear a stranger’s hand  
 ‘ To share the produce! Rest your heads secure  
 ‘ From midnight phund’rers! and, when you return  
 ‘ From daily labour, fear not to behold,  
 ‘ Within your cottage door, the waster’s hand—  
 ‘ Th’ assassin’s spoil; for you shall dwell in peace;  
 ‘ And, henceforth, whilst the blessing life remains,

' Shall look upon your smiling Innocents,  
 ' Nor feel the horror of the thought, that these,  
 ' Rise up to taste your sorrows, and endure  
 ' Th' oppressive burdens you have groan'd beneath,  
 ' For they shall reap where you have nobly sown !

' A fairer Isle than Britain, never Sun  
 ' View'd in his wide career. A lovely spot  
 ' For all that life can ask, centering charms,  
 ' Here, only realized—salubrious, mild;  
 ' Its Rivers, glistening to the noon-tide beam,  
 ' Meandering, glide, in silent majesty,  
 ' Bearing all blessings to the rich campaigns.  
 ' Its woods delight the eye, its hills arise,  
 ' Clothed in perpetual verdure. Its fair views  
 ' And prospects infinite, where'er we turn,  
 ' Unfold new beauties, and, pourtray the haunts  
 ' Of partial Nature, who, here seems to reign,  
 ' In all her pristine glory, scattering round  
 ' With an unsparing hand, her noblest gifts,  
 ' Exhaustless, varying with the changeful scene,  
 ' Yet, lovelier for the change; as tho' she sat  
 ' Deck'd for her bridal morn, whilst with delight,  
 ' She watch'd her Lord, emerging from the East,  
 ' And smiled new ravishments.—To crown the whole  
 ' In one delightful word, which fills the breast  
 ' With all sweet hopes, and tender sympathies—



‘ This pride of the Creation is our HOME!—  
 ‘ Our Fathers’, and our own dear Native Land!  
 ‘ Nor shalt thou, England! in thy plenitude  
 ‘ Of good and graceful things, be left unprais’d  
 ‘ For that which stamps the worth of all beside—  
 ‘ Thy real greatness! Here, in gay attire,  
 ‘ (Returning thus what Heaven so bounteous gives)  
 ‘ Mild Hospitality spreads wide her door,  
 ‘ And with the loaded banquet, courts the stay  
 ‘ Of passing Stranger—Here the forms Divine,  
 ‘ Justice and Mercy, Liberty and Truth,  
 ‘ As marshall’d by the virtues of the sky,  
 ‘ Spread wide their banners.—To these happy shores,  
 ‘ (Encompassing an earthly Paradise)  
 ‘ The world’s remotest sons direct their gaze,  
 ‘ And fain would claim the privilege we boast  
 ‘ Of calling *this* their Country! O our Isle!  
 ‘ Thou Queen of Earth, henceforth, when thou art  
     named,  
 ‘ May every heart, bound with transporting joy  
 ‘ That he was born a BRITON!

‘ Gallant men!

‘ Let us with grateful heart, receive this boon  
 ‘ Which God hath given us, and, if future Danes  
 ‘ Should dare invade our dwellings, once again  
 ‘ Stand forth to conquer; and, most manifest,

' Make it to all the world, that we are brave,  
 ' And not more brave than free; who can respect  
 ' The rights of others and defend our own.  
 ' And if in times, more distant, there should rise\*  
 ' Great foes and many, we may proudly hope,  
 ' Our Progeny, thinking of us their Sires,  
 ' Will rise vindictive, and th' Invader's spear  
 ' Trample in dust, as we this day have done.

' Before we part, my Subjects ! let me say,  
 ' With unfeign'd gratitude, the debt I owe  
 ' For constancy like yours. 'Mid troubles deep,  
 ' And hardships, such as never men endured,  
 ' You, uncomplaining, and unconquer'd, stood,  
 ' Foremost in every toil : and tho' you saw  
 ' Success far off, yet, patient were your looks,  
 ' And firm your hearts, and true, to me your King.  
 ' On this proud day, posterity shall dwell,  
 ' And when they talk upon past deeds, on you,

\* After the defeat of ~~Mar~~ and Hubba, other parties of Danes arrived in England, but they were constantly defeated by Alfred, who, in the latter part of his reign enjoyed an uninterrupted peace, having, by his valour as a general, and his talents as a legislator, raised his country to the highest pitch of happiness and glory ; exhibiting to the latest generations, how much, under the most discouraging circumstances, may be accomplished by a wise and good king.

- ‘ Heap praises, whilst the glorious Sun on high
- ‘ Makes their hearts glad.

- ‘ Now, Subjects ! that your days
- ‘ Comfort may yet attend,—one small return
- ‘ Of me receive. Each man whose sword was drawn
- ‘ In this his country’s cause, and who requires
- ‘ A safe and quiet home, shall soon possess,
- ‘ Together with my smiles, a plat of land,
- ‘ A cottage, that shall every good contain,
- ‘ And I will be your Father ! I will rule
- ‘ In mercy, and my thoughts, by night and day,
- ‘ Shall be to serve you, and to make you feel
- ‘ Protection and all joy.’

Sudden there rose

A voice of admiration, indistinct ;—

Sounding as doth the distant sea ; for each  
Felt his heart leap and mutter’d the half prayer.  
When ALFRED thus again :

- ‘ Most gallant men !
- ‘ Onemoment more. My words have not been framed
- ‘ To self-applause, nor hath my heart been taught
- ‘ To see aught good, but, from the Hand of God,
- ‘ When speaking of your valour and your might,
- ‘ I know you but the instruments ! On high

' Dwells the great Ruler of all mortal things !  
 ' With him have we found favour ! He it was  
 ' Who this deliverance wrought, who, by His hand  
 ' Unseen, made plain our path, and at this hour,  
 ' Gives us to triumph ! He it was who screen'd,  
 ' Our heads 'mid perils infinite ! His arm  
 ' Fought on our side !—Saxons, with me rejoice !  
 ' But, to the God of Heaven be all the praise !'

The Monarch ended, when loud shouts arose ;—  
 A noise, like that which shakes the troubled air,  
 Far o'er the western tide, when gather'd clouds  
 Hide the return of day ; while Ocean raves,  
 And equinoctial blasts assault the sky,—  
 The sky returns the blast, with heighten'd powers  
 To ravage and destroy ; whilst waves on waves,  
 In air commingling, fight for mastery ;—  
 'Till Nature, in her throes and agony,  
 Brings forth the dread Tornado !

Each replied,  
 ' But to the God of Heaven be all the praise !'

THE END.

## ERRATA.

### VOL. I.

Page 36, line 12, for *Goliah*, read *Goliath*.

132, line 10, insert the word "*as*."

144, line 17, for *guide*, read *guides*.

156, line 8, for *seet*, read *seest*.

188, line 20, for *these*, read *therę*.

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### VOL. II.

Page 27, line 5, for *has*, read *hast*.

53, line 20, for *assay'd*, read *essay'd*.

92, line 22, for *Or*, read *On*.

*Published by the same Author.*

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